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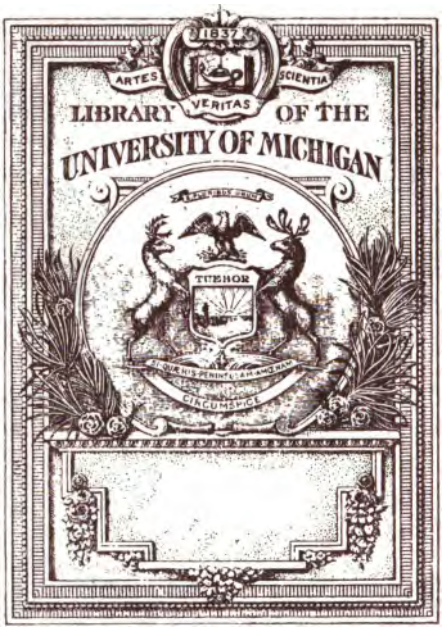
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STORIES OF THE BIBLE

THE PEOPLE

OF THE

CHOSEN LAND

BY

MYLES ENDICOTT

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DORÉ AND OTHER EMINENT ARTISTS

VOLUME II.

EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING COMPANY
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RECESSIONAL.

God of our fathers, known of old —
Lord of our far-flung battle line —
Beneath Whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine —
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies —
The captains and the kings depart;
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!

Far-called our navies melt away —
On dune and headland sinks the fire —
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe —
Such boasting as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the Law —
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard —
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding calls not Thee to guard —
For frantic boast and foolish word,
Thy mercy on thy people, Lord!

Amen.

—*Kipling.*

373114

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DAVID PLAYING BEFORE SAUL. (*H. S hopin.*)

STORIES OF THE BIBLE.

STORY OF SAUL AND DAVID.

He holds no parley with unmanly fears;
Where duty bids he confidently steers,
Faces a thousand dangers at her call,
And, trusting in his God, surmounts them all.
— *Cowper.*

King Saul began his reign nobly as King of the Israelites: for the inspiration of God was upon him. But, alas, he tired all too soon of doing right, and fell back into his own selfish ways.

Then the Philistines rose in great numbers against the Israelites. Saul himself was terrified; and he called the people together

and bade them come with him to Gilgal, for Samuel had so directed them.

Samuel did not go to Gilgal with the people; but he promised to come on the seventh day and offer sacrifices.

The seventh day came, but Samuel did not appear. Messengers were sent out, but they could not see him upon the road. Then Saul grew impatient. "We will wait no longer!" he cried. "Give me the lamb, and I myself will offer the sacrifice!"

Now this was against the law; for no one but the priests and prophets could offer sacrifices.

And so, when Samuel came and saw the smoke rising from the altar, he groaned and said, "What hast thou done, O Saul! Now will thy kingdom be taken from thee; for God no longer approves thy ways."

But Saul called his army together, and they went out against the Philistines.

Now, Saul had a son whose name was Jonathan; and when he saw the Philistines waiting in their tents, he called to his armor-bearer and said, "Let us go up to the Philistines and fight them. They are stonger than we, but we can conquer them if only we trust in the Lord."

So Jonathan and his armor bearer went towards the great army.

The enemy laughed when they saw these two youths coming towards them. But Jonathan pressed on up the steep, narrow path and over sharp, rough rocks.

When these two had reached the top of the hill, they began to fight — these two alone, against the great army. Twenty men already had they slain, when a great rumbling was

heard in the ground beneath their feet. The earth shook; and the Philistines, terrified, turned and fled.

Louder and louder, nearer and nearer, the rumbling came; the Philistines ran in all directions; and so great was the confusion as they ran, that they fell upon each other; and so thousands were trampled to death. Thus were the Philistines defeated.

But Saul grew more and more a king, proud in his own strength, and forgetting the God of Israel.

Once God bade him go against a heathen people, who, in all these years, would not repent, and slay them every one, and all the cattle with them. Saul went against them and conquered them; but the king he brought to his own country, and many of the cattle he saved for his own use.

"O Saul, Saul!" Samuel cried; "why hast thou disobeyed?" But Saul caught at Samuel's garment, begging him not to go away. The garment rent in his grasp, however, and Samuel went away, prophesying, "So, O Saul, shall thy kingdom be rent in twain!"

But Saul would not listen. Day after day he disobeyed; till at last God spoke to Samuel and said, "Go thou to the house of Jesse. Take with you a horn of oil; and thou shalt find there a son of Jesse whom thou shalt annoint as king."

Samuel obeyed; and when he had come to the house of Jesse, he bade the people prepare for sacrifice. Now Jesse had eight sons, and seven of them came to the sacrifice. The oldest son was tall and strong and manly looking.

"Surely this must be the man," so noble looking is he," thought Samuel.

But God made no answer; and though Samuel's heart went out to this oldest son, he knew it was not he whom God meant should be anointed. And as the other six sons came forward, Samuel asked of God, "Is this the one?"

Still there came no answer. "Have you another son?" Samuel asked of Jesse, when the seven had passed on.

"One other — David," Jesse answered; "but he is upon the hillsides watching the sheep."

"Let him be brought," Samuel said.

Then David was brought, a beautiful youth, and one who could sing sweet songs and make sweet music upon the harp; but little had he ever thought of kingly honors.

As he entered into the presence of Samuel, then God's voice spoke. "This is the one," the voice said; and Samuel poured the oil upon his head and anointed him as the king to come.

Now, while David watched his sheep upon the hillsides, and played wonderful music upon the harp he himself had made, Saul dwelt in his house, wretched and unhappy. Every day he grew more rebellious, more unhappy and cruel.

"Let us bring some one to our master," his people said, "who can make sweet music; maybe it would comfort him."

And it was in this way that David was brought to Saul; the beautiful, fair-haired David, whose face was like sunshine and whose voice was full of melody.

And he came and sang to Saul. And as

Saul listened and looked upon the sweet-faced singer, the evil in his heart faded away. Joy came again; and for a time Saul turned again to the right and good.

But it was only for a time; and when temptation came again, Saul fell, and again the disapproval of God was upon him.

Again the Philistines came against the Israelites. They had pitched their tents upon a high mountain; and when the Israelites saw them, they pitched their tents upon another high mountain across the valley.

Now the Philistines had over them a most terrible giant leader, named Goliath. He was taller than any man the Israelites had ever seen. He was covered with a thick armor, which shone in the sunlight like brass; and he bore a sword, and a spear, and a shield so heavy that no man but Goliath could have lifted it from the ground.

This great giant, with a voice like thunder, came out from among the Philistines and cried, "Why do you come to fight against us? Choose a man from among your people, and let him come and kill me if he can!"

The Israelites trembled with fear when they heard the giant's voice; and no man among them, not even Saul himself, dared go out to meet him.

But one day Jesse said to David, who was at home watching his sheep, "Leave thy sheep to-day, and go to the camp and see how it fares with thy brothers. Carry to them this corn and bread, and to their leader take these ten cheeses."

David hurried away; and, as he came to where the army lay, he heard a great shout; for the Israelites were about to go into battle.

But as he drew near, again Goliath came

out and thundered, "Why do you fight against us? Send out one man who shall meet me in battle and slay me if he can!"

And, as he shouted, the Israelites all fell back afraid.

"Who is this Philistine that he can frighten the Israelites, the chosen people of God?" David cried.

But David's brother was angry when he heard David's words. "What know you of battle," he sneered, "you who art a tender of sheep?"

But some one had told Saul what David had said, and Saul, ready to lean upon anybody or anything, sent for David. And when David came into the presence of Saul, he cried, "O fear not this Philistine! I myself will go out to fight him!"

"But thou art a mere boy," Saul said.

"Thou art unused to battle, and this giant is armed with sword and spear."

"True, I know little of battle and am unused to the sword and spear. But I am not weak. One day a lion and a bear came to my flock and I ran and took away the lamb and slew the lion and the bear. For it was God who gave me strength. So will he help me to contend against this giant."

Then Saul said, "Go, brave boy; and may the Lord be with thee!" Then Saul took his own sword and spear and gave it to David. But David took them not. "I know not how to use them," he said; "but I have with me my sling, and it is with this I will fight."

So David chose five smooth stones and put them into his shepherd's bag and went out to meet the giant.

DAVID AND GOLIATH.

When Goliath saw David, he roared with laughter. "Hast thou come out to kill me?" he said. "Thou, a boy! Come to me and let me at once give thy body to the birds of the air for food!"

But David shrank not. "Thou comest to me with sword and spear," he called back to the giant, "but I come to thee in the name of the Lord, God of Israel!

"I know thou art very strong and I am very weak: but God is with me, and he is stronger than thou!

"He will give me power to conquer and to slay thee; for the battle is God's, and he will give thee into my hands."

And, with these brave words, David ran out to meet Goliath. He took one of the smooth stones and put it into his sling and shot it at the giant. Straight through the air

it flew and hit the giant in the forehead, so that he fell, stunned, to the ground. Then David ran and took the giant's sword, and cut off his head, and held it up before the people.

A great cry of terror went up from the Philistines who had seen their great commander fall, they hardly knew why; and they turned and fled. Then the Israelites pursued them and drove them, scattered, into the forests and across the plains.

Then Saul took the head of Goliath and carried it to Jerusalem; and the Israelites held a great feast and rejoiced in their victory.

Now, although David before this had played and sung to Saul, that king had forgotten him. So that now when he came into the tent he said, "Who art thou?"

And David answered, "I am David, the son of Jesse, of Bethlehem."

Then Saul took David to his house to live with him at his own court and receive the honors due him for so brave a victory. And at the court David saw Jonathan, Saul's son, and these two youths became close friends.

All the servants in the house loved David, too; for he was kind and gentle always. And for a long time Saul loved David above his own son even, and was glad that the people of the court loved him.

But, by and by, a change came into Saul's heart. Wretched and unhappy as he was, with God against him because he himself was not true, he began to hate those around him who were not wretched and unhappy. And when he saw the sunshine in David's face, and saw the love about him, he grew jealous and bitter towards him, and his love and pride in him changed to burning hate.

Every time David went forth into battle, Saul hoped he would be slain; but God was with David, and Saul saw him come back from each battle more and more victorious.

At one time, when David had returned victorious from a battle with the Philistines, the women of Israel went out to meet him, dancing and singing.

One company sang:

"SAUL HAS SLAIN HIS THOUSANDS."

And the other company answered:

"AND DAVID HIS TEN THOUSANDS."

These words displeased Saul, and he was very wroth. "They sing that David has slain his ten thousands, while I have slain but thousands." And Saul was jealous; and, at last, so bitter did he become, that he commanded Jonathan and the servants of the house to slay David. Then Jonathan went to

David and said, "Hide thyself, for my father seeks to slay thee."

Then Jonathan, gentle and kind of heart as was David himself, went to Saul and pleaded for the friend he loved.

"Sin not against David, O my father and my king," he said. "Slay him not, for he is good; and never has he disobeyed thee. Remember how bravely he fought the Philistines, killing the cruel giant. Thou didst rejoice in him then; why now art thou changed?"

And for a time Saul's heart was softened; and he promised that no harm should come to David.

Then David came back to the house of Saul, and again there was peace between them. But soon the Philistines came again against the Israelites, and David again went forth and conquered them.

SAUL ATTEMPTS THE LIFE OF DAVID.

Now Saul rejoiced not in this victory; but rather did his heart grow black again towards David. And one day, when David sat even at his feet playing upon his harp, Saul raised a spear; and had not David escaped from the room, he would have slain him.

David at last went to Samuel at Ramah. He dared stay no longer in the house of Saul. But when Saul heard that he had fled to Samuel, he sent soldiers to take him.

But when the soldiers entered into the presence of Samuel, the wish to slay David went out from them, and in its place came sweet peace and love towards all men.

Then Saul sent more men; but they, too, grew gentle in the presence of Samuel and the holy prophets with him.

Furious then, Saul himself came; but

even upon him the sweet spirit fell; and for the time his heart was full of kindness towards David, and again he promised to do him no harm.

But again temptation came upon Saul, and again his heart filled with bitter hatred towards David.

David saw this; and escaping from Ramah he fled to Jonathan and told him of his trouble and of his danger at the hand of Saul.

"I know thy father, Saul, is seeking to kill me," David said. "He does not tell thee this, because he knows that I have found grace in thine eyes, and that it would vex thee; but I know there is but a step between me and death."

It was hard, indeed, for Jonathan to hear these things, for he loved his father, and his friend above all else in the world.

Jonathan bowed his head in grief. "Tell me," he said, "what can I do to save thee?"

"To-morrow Saul has a great feast," David answered, "and he thinks I shall be there. Let me go and hide myself instead. My father has a great sacrifice for his family at Bethlehem, and I wish to be there. If Saul inquires for me, tell him I asked to go to my father's sacrifice at Bethlehem. Watch then, and see if he is angry or not."

And Jonathan said, "Let us go out now into the field, and we will think what we must do." So they both went out and walked in the field. "To-morrow I will talk to my father," Jonathan said, "and if I see that he is kind and friendly, I will send and tell thee; if he is angry, then too I will tell thee, and send thee away safely. But if we part, and never see one another again, do not forget me.

Love me, and think about me while I live; and after I am dead, remember me, and be kind to my children and family. Do not forget my love to thee."

Then David promised never to forget Jonathan; and to love his children, and be kind to them after Jonathan's death. But David and Jonathan could not talk together long. David must hide himself. So Jonathan said, "Go now; and, after three days, come again to the place where thou didst hide before. Then I will come and bring a lad with me, and I will shoot arrows, and tell the lad to go and bring them to me. If I tell the lad that the arrow is near to him, know that all is safe; but if I tell him that the arrows are far off beyond him, then know that there is danger, and made haste, and escape."

The next day was Saul's feast but David

was not there. Saul looked for him, but could see him nowhere. The next day, David again was not at the feast. Then Saul asked, "Where is David? He was not at the feast yesterday, and I do not see him here to-day. Why does he not come?"

"He asked me to let him go home," Jonathan said, "to a sacrifice at Bethlehem. His father wanted him there." Then Saul was angry, and he said, "David shall die; send, and bring him here, for he shall surely die."

But Jonathan answered, "Why must David die? He has done no wrong." Then Saul was still more angry. He threw a spear at Jonathan that he might kill him because of his love for David. But Jonathan got up quickly, and went away from the table.

The third day Jonathan went again into

the field to meet David, taking the little boy with him. Jonathan had his bow and arrows. He shot an arrow a long way off, and then cried to the boy, "Run, and bring me the arrow! There it is, a long way beyond thee!"

David was hidden in the field, and heard what Jonathan said. And when the boy was sent home, David arose and came to Jonathan. He knew that he must now go, and part from his dear friend; and that perhaps they would never meet again.

David and Jonathan threw their arms around each other, and kissed one another, and wept. Then Jonathan said, "Go in peace; God will be with us; He will be our friend. Do not forget me, nor my children after me; and I will never forget thee."

Then David went away, and Jonathan, sad at heart, returned home.

He went to Nob, in Benjamin, where the tabernacle was; and there he saw Abimelech, the priest. David knew that he could not now go often to worship God in the holy place; for he must hide from Saul, that he might thereby save his life.

Abimelech wondered very much to see David, and asked why he had come. "King Saul sent me here," he said, "upon secret business. He commanded me not to say what the business is. Give me, I pray thee, some of the bread I see there." Now the bread which Abimelech had was the shew-bread. It was hallowed bread, of which the priests alone might eat. But Abimelech gave some to David and to the men with him, because they were hungry and could get no other.

Then David asked the priest to give him some armor. Abimelech had there the sword

of Goliath, and this he showed to David. David was pleased to see this sword again; for it made him remember how God hath helped him to conquer and kill the great giant, so short a time before.

David took the sword and went to Gath, and to King Achish. Achish was a kind king; but he was a Philistine. Naturally his people did not love David, remembering what he had done in times past to the Philistines. And so David was unhappy at Gath. He was afraid of Achish and of his people; he knew they might kill him or tell Saul about him. Still he dared not go away without reason.

So he pretended to be mad. He ran about wildly, and scratched upon the doors, and did many more seemingly mad things. Then Achish sent him away; and, free to do as he pleased, he went and hid in a cave.

While David was in the tabernacle at Nob, talking to the priests, a man came whose name was Doeg. He was the keeper of Saul's cattle, a very wicked man, and an enemy of David. Saul had heard that David was escaping from place to place, and so tried to find him, that he might kill him. He asked his servants to tell him all they knew about David, who were his friends, and who had helped him to escape.

And Doeg said, "I saw David come to Nob, to Abimelech the priest; and I saw Abimelech give him food and the sword of the giant Goliath." At once, then, Saul sent for Abimelech, and all the priests that were at Nob. "Why hast thou given bread and a sword to David my enemy, and helped him to fight against me, and kill me?" he cried. Abimelech answered, "David is not an enemy!

He is faithful and obedient to the king; and I knew nothing of all this."

But Saul would not believe Abimelech, and he commanded the servants who stood by to slay Abimelech, and to put all the other priests to death!

But the servants would not kill these holy priests. Then Saul turned to Doeg. "Kill thou these priests!" Doeg, cruel as Saul, was glad to obey. He drew his sword, and slew them all, eighty-five in number, and then went to Nob and killed the people there, men, and women, and children. Only one son of Abimelech, named Abithar, escaped, and he ran to David, and told him the sad story.

But David was not alone in his wanderings. Many men came to help him; ready to follow wherever he went. He was their captain, and they obeyed him.

The Philistines were now fighting again against Israel; and David and his men went to try to conquer them. One day David was very tired and thirsty with long fighting. The Philistines camp was then at Bethlehem; and there was a well of water near it. "Oh! that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem!" David cried. David's soldiers, hearing the cry, ran in through their enemies, drew the water and brought it to David. So much did they love their master that they thought not of their own danger! But when David saw his friends in peril, he said, "No, I will not drink it! My brave soldiers have suffered more than I, and they are thirsty too. This water is too good for me; I will give it to God." So he poured it out, an offering to the Lord.

But where was Jonathan all this time?

DAVID AND JONATHAN.

Did he ever see his friend David again? Yes; for Jonathan had not forgotten him. Once, when he heard where David was, he went to find him secretly in the wood. How glad they were to meet again! They had much to say to one another. "Do not fear," Jonathan said; "my father cannot hurt thee, because God has promised to keep thee, and some time to make thee king." Then David and Jonathan prayed together, and kissed one another. It was the last time; they never met again on earth.

When Saul had finished fighting with the Philistines, he went into the wilderness, taking his many soldiers with him. They wandered about day after day among the caves, trying to find David. But God still kept David in safety from his enemies. At last Saul came to a cave, and went into it to rest, for he was

tired. The cave was very large; so large it could hold many people, and Saul and his men thought they were alone in it. But David and his soldiers were in this very cave. Saul did not see them, for they were in another part of it; so he went in, and lay down, and fell asleep.

David's men saw Saul when he came into the cave, and said to their master, "See, there is Saul! God surely has given him into thy hand!" David arose and went to Saul. There he lay asleep. He had no power to hurt David, but David could kill him now if he liked. But David had no angry feelings in his heart; he had no wish to hurt his enemy; but he went quietly and cut off a piece of Saul's robe.

By and by Saul awoke and arose to go away. Then David cried out and said to

him, "My lord, the king!" Saul turned round amazed. David bowed before him, and said, "God to-day gave thee into my power when thou wast asleep in the cave. But I remembered that thou art a king chosen by God, and therefore I did not hurt thee. I never did thee any wrong. Why dost thou try to kill me? God knows I am not thine enemy."

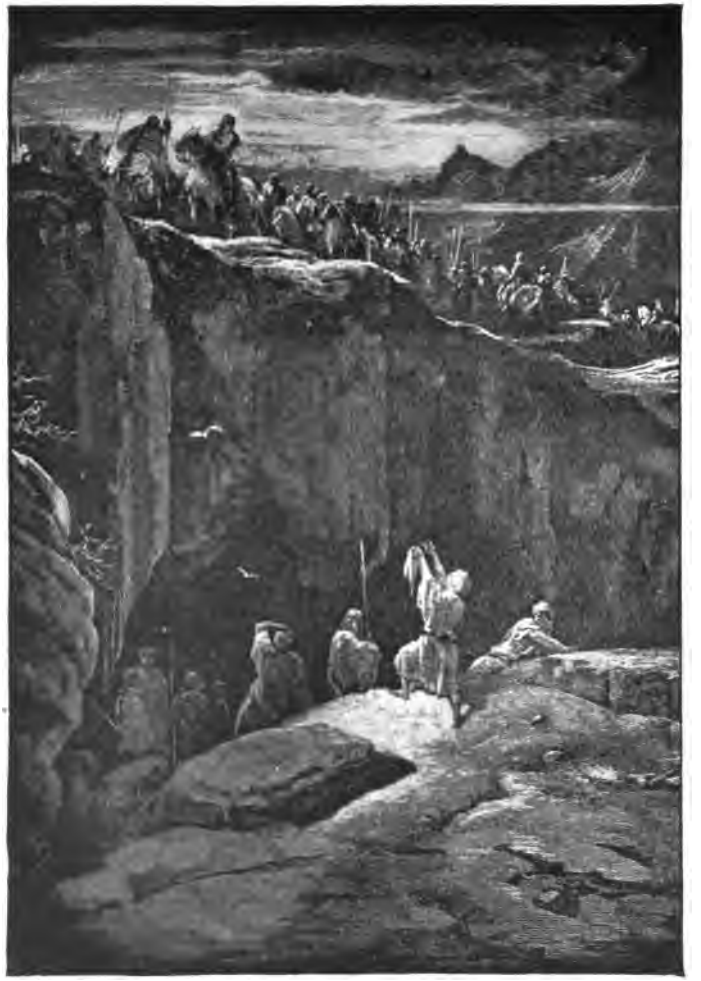
Then Saul began to weep. "Is it thy voice, my son David?" For David's gentleness made Saul gentle, too. "Thou hast been more righteous than I," Saul said; "thou hast rewarded me good, though I rewarded thee evil." Then Saul went away; and David's kindness made Saul, too, kind for a little time.

While David was wandering about in the wilderness of Engedi and Paran, he and his men were often in need of food.

There was a man who lived at Maon, named Nabal. He was very rich, and had great possessions in Carmel of sheep and goats and camels. Now David knew that Nabal was very rich, and he sent messengers to him to ask for food, bidding them speak most respectfully to Nabal; for David taught them always to honor and respect all men. But Nabal was a selfish and cruel man. He cared little for other people. All his money and all his possessions he kept for his own use. He never gave a thought to the poor and hungry, who had no home and no food. So Nabal was angry with David's servants, and instead of giving them anything, he drove them away, and sent them back again to David. Then David was angry, too. He told his men to take their swords, and make themselves ready to go to Nabal, that they might kill this selfish man.

Now, Nabal had a wife named Abigail; but she was not at all like her husband; she was gentle and kind, and willing to help others whenever she could. And so, when Abigail heard of Nabal's cruelty, she was most sorrowful. She knew that David was a good man, and that he was in great trouble, trying to hide from Saul. Abigail wished to be kind to him and his men; so she called her servants, and told them to make ready some sheep, and corn, and figs, and grapes, and take them to David, while she herself followed, not telling Nabal where she was going. When Abigail met David, she fell on her face before him. Then she spoke very gently to David, begging him not to be angry, but to forgive her wicked husband.

Samuel meantime had died. He had died and was buried at Ramah; and all Israel wept and mourned for him.



"WHY DO YOU NOT WATCH OVER YOUR KING."

But David was still in the wilderness of Ziph, when Saul again went to seek him there. David saw Saul come into the wilderness, but Saul did not see him; so Saul put a pillow upon the ground, and lay down, and fell asleep; and all his men slept too. Then David arose and went to Saul. He was lying upon the ground on the pillow; his spear was by him, and the soldiers were sleeping around him. It was night and all was quiet. None saw David and his men.

"Let us kill Saul now," one of David's servants said; "all his soldiers are asleep, and he is in our power; he cannot defend himself." But David said, "No, we must not kill him, though he is our enemy. He is our king and we are his servants, and, therefore, we must respect and honor Saul."

Then David took away Saul's spear, and

a bottle of water which was near the pillow, and went to the top of a hill afar off. Then he cried to Saul's captain and said, "What are you doing? Why do you not watch over your king? See where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster." Saul knew David's voice, and cried, "Is this thy voice, my son David?" Then David said, "Yes, it is my voice. Why dost thou come, seeking to kill me? What evil have I done?" Again Saul felt sorry, and said, "I have sinned, but I will no more seek to do thee wrong." Then David again willingly forgave Saul, and spoke gently to him; and one of Saul's servants came, and took back the spear and the bottle of water. Then Saul blessed David and they parted, never to meet each other again.

David grew weary of wandering about in

fear of Saul. He knew that Saul would forget his promise and might come again and try to kill him. So he determined to go to the Philistine's country and ask Achish, king of Gath, to take care of him. Accordingly David called his family and his soldiers; and they all went to Gath. Achish met David and was very kind to him. He gave him a city, named Ziklag, and there David lived in safety. Saul knew this, but he did not again try to kill him. But David was not idle while he lived at Ziklag. He often went out to fight against the Amalekites, and at last he conquered and killed them.

But all this time Saul was still in his own home, unhappy and discontented; the evil spirit troubling him more and more. The Philistines now came to fight against Israel, and Saul gathered together all his soldiers at

Gilboa. But his heart stood still when he looked upon the army of his enemies.

What could Saul do now? He called his servants, and asked them if they knew a witch who could tell him what he wanted to know. The witches were wicked women, who pretended to have the power of raising dead people, and of foretelling future things. But Saul was now grown so weak, that he was willing to hang his hopes even upon the advice of a witch. Saul's servants told him of a witch living at Endor. So he changed his dress that people might not know him, and went secretly, by night, to Endor. Saul came to the house where this wicked woman lived, and asked her first to raise a dead man to life for him. The woman did not know Saul, and refused at first to do what he asked; for she was afraid of being put to death. But Saul

told her not to fear, and he promised she should not be punished. Then she said, "Whom shall I bring up?" And Saul told her to bring up Samuel.

The foolish woman had no power to raise Samuel. But God himself raised up a figure like Samuel, and he spoke to Saul. When the woman saw the figure coming up out of the ground, she herself was frightened. She cried out for fear. Then Saul looked, too. What did he see? He saw the figure of an old man. It was like Samuel, and he bowed down to the ground. Then the figure asked, "Why hast thou called me up?" Saul said, "I am sore distressed; the Philistines make war against me; God is gone from me, and answers me no more; and I have called thee to tell me what I shall do." Then the figure said, "Why dost thou ask me, if the Lord is

SAUL AND THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

thine enemy? He has departed from thee, and given the kingdom to David, because thou obeyedst not His voice. The Philistines will fight against Israel; and Israel will be conquered; and to-morrow thou and thy sons shall be with me."

Saul fell down upon the ground in fear and horror. He had now no hope! To-morrow he must die! His body must fall in the battle-field! The woman understood now who Saul was; and she and his servants tried to comfort him. She spoke kindly to him; and made ready some meat and bread for him to eat. But all this could do Saul no good; for he was going to die! Saul arose from the ground, ate the food the woman had made ready, and then, with his servants, went away. It was night — Saul's last night of life! Saul could not sleep. In the morning he went to

DEATH OF SAUL.

the battle! The battle was on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines conquered, and many of the Israelites were slain on the field.

Then the Philistines followed on after Saul, and shot him with their arrows, and sorely wounded him. Then he knew that his enemies would soon come and kill him. He called his armor-bearer, and asked him to kill him, that he might not be put to death by the cruel Philistines. But the armor-bearer was afraid to kill Saul; so Saul took a sword, and fell upon it, and died. When the armor-bearer looked at Saul, and saw that he was dead, he, too, took a sword, and fell upon it, and died.

And the Israelites saw that Saul and his sons were dead. They ran from their cities, and left their houses; and the Philistines came and took possession of them. The next day, when the Philistines came to look at the field

THE INHABITANTS OF JABESH-GILEAD RECOVERING THE BODIES OF SAUL AND HIS SON.

of battle, they found Jonathan, and his brothers, and Saul — all lying dead upon the ground. The cruel Philistines cut off Saul's head, and took away his armor, and sent home the news of their victory, shouting for joy. They nailed Saul's body to a wall; but the people who lived in Jabesh-Gilead were kind to their king, and honored him; and took his body, and his sons' bodies, and buried them under a tree, and mourned for them many days.

And all this time David was still in Ziglag. After the battle a messenger came to David from Saul's camp. His clothes were rent and dust was upon his head; and David knew that he had bad news to tell. "Who has gained the battle?" he asked, "and what has happened to Saul and Jonathan?" The messenger said, "The people are fled from the

battle, and many are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan are dead also."

Then David asked him how all this happened, and the messenger told him that he had seen Saul on Mount Gilboa in great distress, pursued by the Philistines, and that Saul had asked him to slay him. "So," the man said, "I stood on him, and slew him, and took his crown, and his bracelet; and I have brought them here to thee." And was David pleased? No; he wept for Saul, and for his dear friend Jonathan. He was even angry with the man who told him of their death; for David thought the story was all true.

KING DAVID.

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.

—*Longfellow.*

And now David was to be king! For such had been the prophecy told long years before.

But Jonathan, his friend, was dead; it was only through his death that David could become king over Saul's kingdom — and David's heart was so filled with grief and loneliness that kingship was to him but cold recompense for what he had lost. So there was little joy in David's heart at the thought of being king. Then, too, he still mourned

for Saul, whom once he had loved and served so faithfully. And, first before all other duties, he called together the men of Jabesh-Gilead and thanked and blessed them for rescuing the body of Saul and burying it with honor.

For a time there was war between Abner, Saul's captain, and David; and for a few years the kingship was witheld from David. But it came about in time that David and Abner made peace with each other, and David became ruler over all Israel.

Then, again, the Philistines came upon him; but he met them and overcame them, and soon his kingdom was secure to him.

This done, his first act was one of reverence and worship. He remembered first of all God's holy Ark. The Ark was at Kirjath-Jearim, in the house of Abinadab, who had

kept it many years; but David wanted it now to rest in his own city of Jerusalem. So he went with many of his people to Kirjath-Jearim to bring it back. They came to Abinadab's house, and took out the Ark, and put it in a new cart; and Uzzah and Ahio, Abinadab's sons, drove the cart. Now David and all the people were glad, and they went with the Ark, playing and singing for joy. After a little time they came to a rough place, and the oxen that drew the cart stumbled, and shook the Ark. Uzzah saw the Ark shake and was afraid it might fall; so he put out his hand and took hold of it. But Uzzah had forgotten how very holy the Ark was. He did not honor it as he ought, and he was punished for it. Many years before God had punished the men of Bethshemesh because they had looked into the Ark, and so now

Uzzah was punished. Uzzah's death was a sad end to David's happiness. All the people were frightened, and David said himself he dared not have the Ark with him.

But there was one man, named Obed-edom, who was not afraid; so it was he who carried the Ark to his house. Obed-edom was very happy while the Ark was with him, for God's blessing came with it. All was harmony and happiness at Obed-edom's house so long as the Ark was there. When David heard that God had so blessed Obed-edom, he was no longer afraid of the Ark. So he went to the house where it was and took it away, the priests carrying it upon their shoulders; for David had learned now to be more reverent, and to teach his people to be reverent too. David and all the people brought the Ark home, and the king was so happy that

he danced for joy. The Ark was put in a tabernacle which David made for it; and then he offered sacrifices again, and blessed the people, and gave them bread and wine, and meat, and sent them away. It was a happy, holy day at Jerusalem, because they had the Ark with them again. The feasting, and singing, and shouting were all holy; and everything was done that day in the fear and to the honor of the God of Abraham.

When at last David had sent the people away, he went to his own house. A good prophet lived in Israel, named Nathan. David loved and honored Nathan very much, and they often talked together. One day, when David was sitting quietly in his beautiful house, he said to Nathan, "See what a beautiful house of cedar I have to live in; but God's Ark has no house; it is only in a taber-

nacle within curtains." Nathan was glad that David loved and honored the Ark so much, and he said, "Do all that is in thy heart, for the Lord is with thee." But that night God spoke to Nathan in a vision, and gave him this message for King David. "God took thee away from thy sheep at Bethlehem, and chose thee to be king over his people Israel. He will bless thee, and thy children after thee; and when thou art dead, then thy son will reign; and God will be with him, and give him riches, and possessions, and rest and peace from all his enemies. He shall build a temple to God, but God does not wish thee to build it. He is pleased with thee because of thy wish to honor him, and he will not forget nor forsake thee all thy life long. He promised to give thee the kingdom forever."

David had promised, we know, to be kind

to Jonathan's children; so he called Ziba, an old servant of Saul, and said, "Tell me whether there are any of Saul's children living now, that I may show the kindness of God to them." Ziba said, "Yes; there is a son of Jonathan, named Mephibosheth, still alive, but he is lame." Then David told Ziba to go and bring Mephibosheth. Now, Mephibosheth became lame in this way. On that sad day when his poor father was killed in battle, his nurse took him up in haste to carry him away, and he fell out of her arms. The fall hurt the little boy, and he was lame ever afterwards.

Mephibosheth felt alarmed when the king sent for him, and he fell on his face before David. But David spoke to him very gently and affectionately; for he remembered Jonathan, and he loved Mephibosheth, because he was Jonathan's son. David said to him,

"Fear not; I will show thee kindness for Jonathan's sake. I will give thee again all the land which belonged to Saul, and thou shalt eat every day at my table." Then Mephibosheth bowed again before David, and thanked him for his kindness.

David called Ziba, and said, "I have given all Saul's possessions to Mephibosheth. Now thou and thy sons must take care of the land for him, and bring the fruits to him; but he shall eat always at my table." Ziba promised to obey the king. He was a rich man, and had many servants, who helped him to take care of Mephibosheth's land. Mephibosheth had a house in Jerusalem where he lived; but every day he dined with the king, and David honored and loved him very much.

But David had new troubles now. When he was young, he had been troubled by Saul;

when he was old, he was now troubled by his own children — for David had sinned, and sin always causes sorrow. David had many sons, and some of them were very wicked. One named Absalom, and another, Amnon, did not live in love and peace together. Absalom hated Amnon, and hatred was in the heart of Absalom a long time. It grew stronger and stronger, till at last he determined to kill his brother Amnon; for he could not rest while he lived. He thought first he would kill him secretly, without his father's knowledge. So he made a great feast and invited all his brothers, and commanded his servants to kill Amnon when he came. Amnon came to the feast. And when they were all merry, the servants rushed in, and smote Amnon, and killed him. All his brothers were frightened, and fled; and Absalom fled, too, because he

was afraid that David would punish him for the murder of his brother.

The king soon heard the sad story; and he arose, and rent his clothes, and lay on the ground, and wept; and all his sons wept, too. But Absalom escaped to Geshur, and stayed there three years; and David did not see him all that time. One son was gone away, and another son was dead. David mourned for them both. At last Joab came to the king, and begged that Absalom might come home. David was ready to forgive his wicked son, for he still loved him. So he told Joab to bring Absalom from Geshur. Still David would not see his son; so Absalom dwelt in his own house in Jerusalem. Two years had now passed since Absalom's return, and David had not yet seen him. Then Absalom began to be impatient and angry. He was not sorry for

his sin: and he did not like to be punished. He sent for Joab, but Joab did not come. Absalom sent again; still Joab did not come. At last Absalom grew angry. There was a field belonging to Joab, near Absalom's house; and Absalom, in his passion, sent his servants to set it on fire.

When Joab saw his field burning, he went to Absalom, and asked, "Why have thy servants set my field on fire?" And Absalom answered, "Because I sent for thee, and thou didst not come. Go now to the king, and ask why I am come from Geshur; I might as well have stayed there, if I am never to see the king's face." This was not a gentle message to his father; still David loved his son so much, that, when he heard the message, he sent for Absalom to forgive him.

So Absalom came to his father, and

bowed before him; and the king kissed Absalom. Though Absalom pretended to be sorry, his heart was still full of pride and rebellion. Soon after he prepared chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And when he saw the people going to the king for judgment, he often called to them, and spoke kindly to them, and asked them what they wanted; for Absalom wished to make the people love him more than they loved his father. He aspired to be king himself; and often said he would make a better king than David.

David knew nothing of all this; for Absalom was very sly, and deceived his father. He said to David, "Let me go now and pay my vow in Hebron; for I vowed when I was in Geshur, that, if the Lord would bring me back to Jerusalem, then I would serve him."

David was pleased to hear this; for he wanted his disobedient son to love and serve the Lord. So he said to Absalom, "Go in peace." But Absalom did not go to Hebron to offer sacrifice, or to worship God. He went there to make himself king. He told the people when they heard the trumpet, to shout, and say, "Absalom reigns in Hebron." Many of the people were in the conspiracy, but others were still faithful to David; and these sent a messenger to tell him of his wicked son's rebellion.

What did David do? He had very little time to think; for Absalom might soon come to Jerusalem and kill him and the faithful people. So David said, "Let us arise and flee." All David's servants were ready to follow him; and they hurried away from Jerusalem and came to the brook Kidron. The people wept with a loud voice, when they saw

the king escaping from his own son. But with him were his servants, and soldiers, his faithful friends, and the priests and Levites with the Ark of God.

When David had come to the top of the hill, he saw a man coming to meet him. It was Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, bringing bread and fruit and wine to David, for the men to eat when they were tired and faint in the wilderness. Then David asked about Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth could not come himself to David; and his cruel servant, seeing his opportunity, told a lie, and accused him falsely to the king. "He is staying at Jerusalem, hoping that the people will come and make him king," the servant said. David was both grieved and angry to hear this. He did not know that it was untrue; so he gave to Ziba all the possessions which he had

before given to Mephibosheth, and then went on into Bahurim.

There a wicked man, named Shimei, came out, and cursed him, and threw stones at him, and said, "God is punishing you now for all your cruelty to Saul. He will take away the kingdom and give it to Absalom." David's friends were angry with Shimei; they would not hear their master so cruelly accused, and they fell upon the wicked man to kill him. But David would not allow this. So David and his men went on their way quietly, leaving Shimei unharmed.

But where was Absalom all this time? He had gone to Jerusalem, to his father's house, there to consult with his friends what he should do. Ahithophel gave very wicked advice to Absalom. He bade him make himself king, and conquer David.

DEATH OF ABSALOM.

There was a friend of David with Absalom, named Hushai. Hushai pretended to be Absalom's friend, and listened to all the wicked prince said; and when he found that Absalom was determined to go to battle against his father, he told the priests, and they told David. So David made his soldiers ready to go and fight against Absalom. But David still loved his son, and he told the captains, even as they went into battle, to deal gently with wicked Absalom.

The battle was in the woods of Ephraim, and David's soldiers soon conquered the rebellious people; and twenty thousand were slain. Then Absalom tried to escape; but as he went through the wood, his long hair caught in the branches of an oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and earth! The mule ran away, and Absalom hung in the oak.

One of David's soldiers saw Absalom hanging there, but harmed him not, because he remembered David's command. He went, however, and told Joab; and Joab, caring not, took three darts, and went to the tree where Absalom hung, and smote him, and killed him. So the battle was ended, and David had the victory.

But David himself did not see the battle. He was waiting by the gate of the city Mahanaim to hear the news. The watchman went up to the top of the wall to look. At last he saw a man running, and he told the king. David began to tremble; for he was indeed afraid. Soon after, another man came running: and the first soon came to David and fell down, and said, "God has delivered up the men who lifted their hand against the king." But David thought most about his

son; and he asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" But the messenger said, "I cannot tell." Then the other man came to David and said, "The Lord has avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee." But David had no thought for the victory; he thought only of Absalom, and he cried again, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The messenger dreaded to grieve the king; he could not then tell him the whole sad story. He only said, "May the king's enemies all be as that young man is now."

But David understood what this meant. He knew that Absalom was slain. He could bear to hear no more. He arose directly and went to his own room, for he wished to be alone; and as he went up he cried, very, very sorrowfully, "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

DAVID MOURNING THE DEATH OF ABSALOM.

ABSALOM.

The pall was settled. He who slept beneath
Was straightened for the grave; and as the folds
Sunk to the still proportions, they betrayed
The matchless symmetry of Absalom.
His hair was yet unshorn, and silken curls
Were floating round the tassels, as they swayed
To the admitted air, as glossy now
As when, in hours of gentle dalliance, bathing
The snowy fingers of Judea's girls.

His helm was at his feet; his banner, soiled
With trailing through Jerusalem, was laid,
Reversed, beside him; and the jewelled hilt,
Whose diamonds lit the passage of his blade,
Rested, like mockery, on his covered brow.

The soldiers of the king trod to and fro,
Clad in the garb of battle; and their chief,
The mighty Joab, stood beside the bier,
And gazed upon the dark pall steadfastly,
As if he feared the slumberer might stir.
A slow step startled him. He grasped his blade

As if a trumpet rang; but the bent form
Of David entered, and he gave command,
In a low tone, to his few followers,
And left him with his dead.

The king stood still
Till the last echo died; then throwing off
The sackcloth from his brow, and laying back
The pall from the still features of his child,
He bowed his head upon him, and broke forth
In the resistless eloquence of woe;

"Alas! my noble boy, that thou shouldst die!
Thou, who wert made so beautifully fair!
That death should settle in thy glorious eye,
And leave his stillness in this clustering hair.
How could he mark thee for the silent tomb —
My proud boy, Absalom!

"Cold is thy brow, my son! and I am chill,
As to my bosom I have tried to press thee,
How was I wont to feel my pulses thrill,
Like a rich harp-string, yearning to caress thee,
And hear thy sweet '*My father!*' from these dumb
And cold lips, Absalom!

"The grave hath won thee. I shall hear the gush
Of music, and the voices of the young;
And life shall pass me in the mantling blush,

And the dark tresses to the soft winds flung;
But thou no more, with thy sweet voice, shalt come
To meet me, Absalom!

"And, oh! when I am stricken, and my heart,
Like a bruised reed, is waiting to be broken,
How will its love for thee, as I depart,
Yearn for thine ear to drink its last deep token!
It were so sweet, amid death's gathering gloom,
To see thee, Absalom!

"And now, farewell! 'Tis hard to give thee up,
With death so like a gentle slumber on thee—
And thy dark sin!—oh, I could drink the cup,
If from this woe its bitterness had won thee.
May God have called thee, like a wanderer, home,
My erring Absalom!"

He covered up his face, and bowed himself
A moment on his child; then, giving him
A look of melting tenderness, he clasped
His hands convulsively, as if in prayer;
And, as if strength were given him of God,
He rose up calmly, and composed the pall
Firmly and decently, and left him there,
As if his rest had been a breathing sleep.

—*N. P. Willis.*

Joab had little sympathy with David's mourning for Absalom. All the people were very glad that the rebels were conquered, and Joab urged David to go and speak to them. Joab was a wise captain, but he was not always a kind friend. He was not gentle to David in his trouble. But David could not forget his poor son. He knew that he must not be idle when there was so much for him to do; so he attended to Joab, and arose and sat by the gate, and his people came to him. They were glad to see him again, and to hear him speak kindly to them. Then the men of Judea came to bring him home to Jerusalem. So he made ready, and went over to the river Jordan; and many of his friends met him there, and brought a boat to carry his family across the river. Ziba, too, came, and his servants and his sons; Shimei came too,—

humble now, — and asked David to forgive him the wicked words he had used.

When David came near to Jerusalem, Mephibosheth came out to meet him; for what Ziba had said of him was not true. Mephibosheth loved the king, and had mourned while David was away. David said, "Why wentest thou not with me?" Mephibosheth answered, "My servant deceived me; I wished to follow thee; but Ziba has falsely accused me." Then David gave Mephibosheth his lands again; and there was friendship between them as before.

And so David returned again to Jerusalem. His people bowed before him, and all was peace again; for God had given him deliverance from all his enemies. David came to be an old man, and he knew that he soon must die.

Years before, he had wished to build a house for God; but God had said, "Thou shalt not build it, but thy son Solomon shall build it after thy death." David thought much about this temple now, and began to get the stones, and the wood, and the iron, ready for Solomon. Then he called Solomon and said, "God has said that thou shalt build His house, and He will give thee knowledge and wisdom to do it. Here are gold, and silver, and brass, and wood, and iron. Arise and work, and God shall be with thee."

But now, just before his death, a new sorrow came to David. Another wicked son rebelled against him. This was Adonijah. Solomon was the rightful king after David; but Adonijah, a wicked and ambitious man, said, "I will be king." David knew nothing of this conspiracy till Solomon's mother,

Bathsheba, went to the king, and told him, asking if her son Solomon was not the rightful king after David. David was grieved at what Adonijah had done; but he comforted Bathsheba, and said, "Solomon shall be king." So David called Zadok, the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and commanded them to take Solomon and make him king. Then they put Solomon upon a mule, and brought him to Gihon; and there Zadok annointed him; and all the people blew with trumpets, and shouted "God save King Solomon." Adonijah at this time was feasting with his friends, Joab and Abiathar, who had forsaken David and had followed the rebellious Adonijah. Adonijah and his company heard a great shout, and wondered what it could be; and soon they were told. "The people are shouting and rejoicing because David has made Solomon

king," the servant said. Then the conspirators ran away, and Adonijah himself escaped to the altar for safety. Solomon though he was now king, did not punish the wicked conspirators. He called Adonijah to him, forgave him, and sent him home.

All was quiet again, and Solomon reigned in peace. And now the time came for David to die. He called his dear son Solomon to him for his last commands, and to bid him farewell. David spoke very affectionately and very solemnly to Solomon, and said, "My son, know thou the God of thy fathers, my God who has kept me all my life long. Serve Him with all thy heart, sincerely and willingly; for God knows the heart." Then David looked up to Heaven, sang a beautiful song of praise to God, and died; and the people of the city mourned for him.

THE STORY OF SOLOMON.

God of our fathers, known of old —
  Lord of our far-flung battle line —
Beneath Whose awful Hand we hold
  Dominion over palm and pine —
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
  Lest we forget — lest we forget.

— *Kipling.*

And now Solomon was king; and a good, wise king he was to be. And because he was wise and good, his reign was a happy one both for himself and for his people.

But first there were many enemies and conspirators who must be sent away for the safety of the kingdom; but after that, when all was quiet, then Solomon hoped to reign in peace.

Solomon went first to Gibeon to sacrifice at the tabernacle there, which was the same

SOLOMON.

tabernacle that Moses had made. And when he had come into Gibeon, he offered a thousand burnt offerings; for Solomon had great wealth, and he longed to use it to the glory of the God of Israel.

And at night, when Solomon slept, there came to him a vision. And in the vision God spoke and said, "Ask what I shall give to thee;" for God knew that Solomon was good and true at heart.

Now Solomon was a young man; and he knew what wealth and power could do for him among his people. But he cared little for these; and when he heard the voice, he said, "O Lord, I am young and I know so little of those things I should know to guide my people aright. Give me, therefore, above all, wisdom and knowledge; a wise and understanding heart, that I may know how to rule over my

people in a way that shall be right in thy sight."

And God was pleased with Solomon's choice, so wise and unselfish. "Behold I have given thee," God said in answer, "wisdom and understanding. But I will give thee more. I will give thee what thou hast not asked for; riches and possessions and honor. And if thou dost obey me and serve me, I will bless thee all the days of thy life."

Then Solomon arose, and went to Jerusalem, and offered sacrifices there. And while he was there two women came to him with a little babe. They were angry, both of them, and they cried to Solomon.

"O my Lord," said one, "I and this woman live in one house. We had each a little son. This woman's child died; and when she saw it was dead she came and

brought it to me, and laid it in my arms while I was sleeping. And my own child she took away from me."

"It is not true!" the other woman cried. "This living child is mine. Judge thou between us."

Solomon was for a moment puzzled. How should he know which woman spoke the truth?

So he took the child and laid it before him. "Bring me a sword," he said to his servant. And when the servant had brought the sword, he said, "Now cut this child in halves; and give one half to one woman and the other half to the other."

But as he spoke one woman fell upon her knees, and cried, "O do not kill it! Let the other woman have it if need be! But spare its innocent life!"

JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON.

And the other woman stood by, a sneer upon her face.

Now Solomon had no intention of slaying the child. He only meant to test the women; for well he knew the child's own mother would cry out to save it.

And when the woman fell upon her knees, Solomon commanded the servant to lay down the sword, and to give the child into her keeping; and she was, indeed, its mother.

And so, day by day, the wisdom of Solomon grew. He knew all that could be known of birds and fishes and animals; of trees and flowers; of the earth and the sea and the heavens.

He wrote many wise books as well; and the histories of the nations,—he knew them all.

But Solomon had not forgotten David's

golden candlesticks outside the Holy Place; and all these were of pure gold.

Seven years was this beautiful temple in building; and then Solomon called all the people of Israel together to dedicate it to God.

The priests brought the Ark and all the holy vessels; and the Ark they placed in the midst of the Holy Place, beneath the wings of the cherubim. In the Ark lay the tables of stone which God had given to Moses so long before; and when the priests came out from the Holy Place where they had reverently placed the Ark, behold a cloud of glory filled the temple, for the Lord was there. Then all the people stood with bowed heads, while their good king blessed them and prayed that in the times to come, when trouble should fall upon the people, that always they might find the temple a place of safety and peace.

Then the people offered sacrifices, and Solomon closed the joyous day with a great feast; and when the sun went down he sent the people away, their hearts filled with the promise God had given them, that, so long as they should love and serve the true God, his blessing should be upon them, and that their temple should ever be a place of safety to them all.

So the years went on. Solomon, a wise, good king, and his people prosperous and happy.

Many marvellous things happened, and great proofs were given the people from time to time of God's watchful care over them. Great success was theirs on every hand, and great was the increase of the land. And still, with all these happy conditions, Solomon, after many years, began to forget the God of Israel

SOLOMON RECEIVING THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.

and to turn towards the things of his kingdom; for his wealth had become enormous and his power was known to all nations.

He had built for himself a most beautiful home, and cities as well. Every year his ships sailed away across the waters, returning with gold and silver and ivory. People in these distant lands used to wonder much when they heard of Solomon's wealth and wisdom. His plates were of solid gold, and his throne was of ivory overlaid with gold. He had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve hundred horsemen.

One day, a beautiful queen, the Queen of of Sheba, came many, many miles to see this great king. She brought with her many servants and camels, and much gold and silver and precious spices, for presents to the king; for she had heard of him and longed to be taught by him.

So Solomon welcomed her gladly to his home, and told her of the God of Israel, from whom all his wealth and wisdom had come. For many a day this queen and king talked together; and when the time came for the queen to go back to her people, she said to Solomon, "When I was in my own land I heard much of thy wisdom and thy possessions. It was not very much I heard, and still I could not believe the half. But now that I have come and have seen for myself, I find thy wisdom and thy possessions far greater than I had been told. O happy are the servants that stand by thy side and hear thy wisdom! Happy are the people who have thee for their king and for their teacher, to teach them the knowledge of God."

Then the Queen blessed and praised the God of Israel, and went away with her servants to her own people.

And yet Solomon could forget God, and grow to love his wealth and his power more than the God who had given them all to him. And it is true that he did; and for a long time he worshipped idols even as the foolish heathen did. But when he turned from God, then he turned from happiness, too. He had now no true peace, no comfort, no joy.

He would walk up and down his beautiful gardens; he would gather his rich fruit; he would smell of the rare, sweet flowers. Then he would walk through his beautiful houses and even visit the cities he had built. He would call his servants about him and listen to their music; he would watch the dancers; but of all these he would weary. And when at last he became an old man, and had tired even of his books and writing, then he would wander up and down the halls of his

great palace and moan, "Vanity, vanity; all is vanity."

Then troubles and dissensions began to rise among the people. And one day when Jeroboam, Solomon's high servant, came before Abijah the priest, the priest seized upon his garment and rent it in twelve pieces; and ten of the pieces he gave to Jeroboam saying, "So shall God rend this kingdom; and ten of the twelve tribes shall he make thee king over."

When Solomon heard what the prophet had said, he was afraid and attempted to slay Jeroboam. But Jeroboam fled into Egypt and was safe.

So Solomon reigned for forty years; but at last death came to him, and he was laid in the tomb of his fathers.

After his death, his son Rehoboam came

to take the throne; but Jeroboam, hearing of Solomon's death, and remembering the prophecy, came also; and together these two contended for the throne. And it came about, even as the prophet had said, that the tribes of Israel divided. Ten chose Jeroboam for their king, and two chose Rehoboam.

And so ended the reign of Solomon, one of the greatest kings the world has ever known; one whom the people loved, and one whom the God of Israel had blessed as he had blessed no other of the kings of Canaan.

STORY OF ELIJAH.

The glories of our birth and state,
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armor against fate:
Death lays its icy hands on Kings;
Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

—*Watts.*

And now there were two kings in Canaan; and the kingdom of Jeroboam was called the kingdom of Israel, and that of Rehoboam was called the kingdom of Judah.

When the ten tribes had made Jeroboam their king, then they went away to their own homes, content with their king, and meaning to support him.

But Jeroboam was suspicious. "If these

people of mine go up to Jerusalem to keep their feasts," he said to himself, "they will see Rehoboam reigning there, and it will not be long before they will want Rehoboam for their king. I must keep them here with me, separate from the tribes of Rehoboam." So he said to his people, "It is too far to journey to Jerusalem to worship. Let us build altars of our own, offer our own sacrifices, and worship in our own way."

So Jeroboam set up two golden images, and said to his people again, "Worship these; for it was these that brought our fathers forth from the wilderness." Then Jeroboam built beautiful temples for the idols, one at Bethel and one at Dan; and to these the people came with their offerings. He made feasts also for the people, to be kept at Bethel; instead of the feasts which the Lord long ago com-

manded the Israelites to keep at Jerusalem. More than all these:—Jeroboam chose wicked men for his priests, and these were to dwell in the houses of the idols, and to offer up sacrifices to them; for he would allow no priests of the Lord to offer sacrifices to God.

Because of this, all the priests and the Levites who were living in the land of the ten tribes, went away to Jerusalem to live; and many others who would not worship the idols went with them, and served Rehoboam as their king. Jeroboam sinned deeply in preventing the people of the ten tribes from going to Jerusalem, where God had commanded them to worship, and in teaching them to worship the golden calves that he had set up. But the people also sinned with him; for many of them willingly obeyed him, and worshipped the idols, caring not to go to Jerusalem to worship the Lord.

One day Jeroboam was standing in the temple of his idols. On the altar, incense was burning to the idol which was at Bethel. There came to him a prophet out of the land of Judah, who said, "Behold, a king shall be born in Judah, named Josiah, who shall come and burn men's bones upon this altar. Then shall it be defiled, and spoiled, and made unclean. This may not happen for many years; but that Jeroboam may know it will surely come true, this altar shall be broken and its ashes emptied out upon the ground this very day."

Jeroboam was angry at the prophet. He stretched out his hand to take hold of him; but as it was stretched out, the Lord made it grow so stiff and withered that he could not draw it back again. The altar was broken also, even as the prophet had said, and its

ashes were scattered on the ground. When Jeroboam saw what the Lord had done, he was terrified, and begged the prophet to pray that his hand might be made well. The prophet did pray for him, and his hand was made well.

Then Jeroboam said to the prophet, "Come home with me and rest thyself, and I will give thee great rewards." But the prophet answered, "Though thou wouldst give me half of all the riches in thine house, I cannot go with thee, neither can I eat bread nor drink water in this place. For the Lord has commanded me, saying, 'Eat no bread, and drink no water there; nor come back by the same way that thou goest.'"

So the prophet turned and went back by another way, to his own land of Judah. Now, there was living at Bethel an old man who

also was a prophet. And when his sons came and told him what the prophet from Judah had done, the old prophet at Bethel asked them which way he went. When he heard, he said to them, "Saddle the ass for me." And they saddled it, and the old man followed after the prophet. When, after a long, long ride he came up with him, he found him sitting under an oak. "Art thou the prophet that came from Judah?" he said to him. He answered, "I am."

Then the old man said, "Come home with me and eat bread." But the prophet from Judah said, "I may not go with thee, nor eat bread nor drink water in this place, for the Lord has commanded me, saying, 'Thou shall not eat bread nor drink water there, nor come back by the way that thou goest.'" Then the the old man said to him, "But I also am a

THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET SLAIN BY A LION.

prophet; and an angel spoke to me, saying, 'Bring him back with thee to thine house, that he may eat bread, and drink water.'"

The prophet from Judah listened to the old man's words and went back with him, and did eat bread and drink water in his house. And the Lord was angry at his disobedience; and even while they sat at the table, he told the old man to speak to the prophet from Judah and say, "Because thou hast disobeyed the Lord and come back to Bethel, and have eaten bread and drunk water there, thou shalt not, when thou art dead, be buried in thy father's sepulchre!"

Then the prophet started to go back to the land of Judah again. But on the road a lion met him and slew him, and his dead body lay in the road, while the ass on which he had ridden, and the lion also, stood by it. Some

men passing that way saw the lion and the ass standing by it. They came and told it in Bethel where the old prophet lived. "It is the prophet from Judah," he cried, "who disobeyed the command of the Lord. Therefore the Lord has given him to the lion, which has slain him, so that he may not be buried in the sepulchre of his fathers."

Then the old man said to his sons, "Saddle the ass for me." And he went to the place where the prophet had been slain, and found his dead body lying by the roadside — the ass and the lion standing by it. The old man took up the prophet's dead body and laid it upon the ass, and brought it to Bethel, and buried it in his own field. Then he said to his sons, "When I am dead, bury me in the sepulchre where the prophet of Judah is buried, and lay my bones beside his

bones; for the words that he spoke against the altar in Bethel shall surely come true."

At this time the son of King Jeroboam grew sick; and Jeroboam said to his wife, "Put on other raiment, that no one may know thee, and go to Shiloh, to the prophet who told me I should be king. Take him a present of ten loaves of bread and a cruse of honey, and he will tell thee if this child shall get well." Jeroboam's wife put on other raiment and went to Shiloh, and came to the prophet's house. Now, the prophet was old and could not see, for his eyes were dim. But the Lord had told him that the wife of Jeroboam was coming to ask about her son; and so when he heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, he said, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam. Alas, I have to tell thee sad tidings. Go, say to Jeroboam, the

Lord has spoken and said, 'Behold, I raised thee up from among the people, and made thee king over ten tribes of Israel; I took those ten tribes away from Solomon's son and gave them to thee. Yet thou hast not obeyed my commandments, but hast, instead, done most wickedly, for thou hast turned away from serving Me and made other gods. Therefore will I send evil upon thee and thy family, until not one of them shall be left alive. And even when they are dead, they shall not be buried in the grave, as the families of other kings are buried: but those that die in the city the dogs shall eat, and those that die out in the field the birds of the air shall eat.' As the Lord hath said, so shall it be. Go back, therefore, to thy house, and before thou shalt come to it thy child shall have died. Let all the people mourn for him

and bury him; for he is the only one of Jeroboam's family who shall be buried in a grave." Then Jeroboam's wife rose up and went out from the prophet's house to her own home; and as she came near to it, the little child died. And they buried him, and all Israel mourned for him, as the prophet had bade them do.

For twenty-two years Jeroboam reigned; then he died, and Nadab, his son, was made king in his place. And although this son knew well his father's sin, and all the prophet said, still, after he was made king, he did not serve God, but worshipped the same golden calves which his father had set up. When he had been king two years, he went with his army against the Philistines and besieged one of their cities. While he was there before the city, a man, named Baasha, rebelled against

him and slew him; and Baasha was made king over the ten tribes of Israel. Then Baasha put every one of Jeroboam's family to death. So the words of the prophet, which he told Jeroboam's wife, came true, that the Lord would bring evil on Jeroboam and his family, until not one of them should be left alive.

But Baasha was a wicked king also, and he too worshipped the golden calves. For twenty-four years he reigned; and when he died Elah, his son was made king in his place. Now, Elah lived in the city of Tirzah, where his father had lived. He reigned for only two years; then, as he was drinking in the house of his chief servant, Zimri, the captain of half of his chariots, came into the house and killed him. Then Zimri made himself king.

The men of Israel were away fighting against the Philistines at this time; but as

soon as they heard what Zimri had done, they vowed he should not rule over them. They chose, instead, Omri, their captain, for their king. Then Omri and the men of Israel came to Tirzah, where Zimri was, and besieged it; and when Zimri saw they were about sure to gain the victory over him and take the city, he went into the king's palace, set it on fire, and perished in the burning building. And so Zimri was king for only seven days.

Omri, when he became king, bought a hill called the hill of Samaria, for two talents of silver. He built a city upon it, which he called the city of Samaria; and in this city Omri lived. The kings of Israel who reigned after him also lived there as long as the kingdom lasted, which was for nearly two hundred years, But Omri, too, was sinful; for he worshipped the golden calves, and encouraged

the people also to worship them. He was king for twelve years. Then he died and was buried in Samaria, the city which he had built; and Ahab, his son, was made king in his stead.

And so, up to this time, six kings had ruled over the ten tribes of Israel, and every one of them were idolators. But Ahab, Omri's son, was more wicked than all who had ruled before him. He took for his wife the daughter of a heathen king. Her name was Jezebel, and she worshipped the idol Baal. Ahab built a house, or temple, for the idol, in the city of Samaria; and chose wicked men to stay there, and offer up sacrifices to the idol. He set up an altar and made a grove, and commanded the people of Israel to worship Baal, as the heathen nations did.

Then the Lord sent the prophet Elijah to tell Ahab that for years there should come no

more rain in the land of Israel; not until Elijah should ask for it. This made Ahab most angry with Elijah; and so the Lord bade the prophet, after he had spoken these words, to flee away where Ahab could not find him. "Go," the Lord said, "and hide by a brook that is in the wilderness. Thou shalt drink of the water of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." So Elijah went and hid by the brook. He drank of the sweet water, and the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and in the evening.

But after a while the brook dried up, for the famine had come in the land. Then the Lord said to Elijah, "Arise, and go to the city of Zarephath, for I have commanded a widow woman there to feed thee." Elijah arose and went; and when he came to the gate of the

ELIJAH NOURISHED BY AN ANGEL.

city, he saw a woman gathering sticks. He called to her and said, "Bring me, I pray thee, a little water in a cup, that I may drink; and bring me, I pray thee, also a piece of bread in thy hand." The woman answered, "As surely as the Lord thy God liveth, I have no bread; I have only a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; even now I was gathering a few sticks that I might go in and bake cakes for myself and my son to eat, lest we starve." But Elijah said to her, "Fear not; go and bake the cakes as thou has said; but make a little cake for me first and bring it. For the Lord says, that although thou hast but little meal and oil, yet they shall last until the famine ceases in the land."

Then the woman, wondering, went and did as Elijah commanded; and she, and he, and her son had food for three whole years;

ELIJAH RAISETH THE SON OF THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH.

for the Lord made the meal and oil to last until the famine was over.

One day the son of the woman grew sick and died; but when she told Elijah of it, he said, "Give me thy son." And he took him out of her arms, and carried him up into his own chamber and laid him on his bed. "O Lord," Elijah cried, "hast thou brought evil upon the woman in whose house I stay, by slaying her son? I beseech Thee, O Lord, let the child's soul come back to him again." Then the Lord heard Elijah's prayer, and sent the soul of the child back to him again, so that he lived; and Elijah took him down out of his chamber, and gave him to his mother, who sat sorrowing in the door of her house.

Now, there were in the land of Israel many other prophets beside Elijah, whom the Lord sent to be teachers among the people.

But Jezebel, the wicked wife of Ahab, hated them all and tried to kill them. Then Obadiah, the chief servant in Ahab's house, a good man and one who feared the Lord, took a hundred of the prophets and hid them in caves, where Jezebel could not find them; and every day he sent them bread to eat and water to drink.

When the famine had lasted for more than three years, the Lord spoke one day to Elijah, and said, "Go show thyself to King Ahab, then I will send rain once more upon the earth." Ahab did not know of course that Elijah was coming; but calling Obadiah, his chief servant to him, he said, "Go and look wherever there are any brooks, or springs of water; perhaps we may find grass enough there to save the horses and mules, and so not lose them all by the famine."

And Ahab and Obadiah went out to

search the land; Ahab one way by himself, and Obadiah another way by himself. As Obadiah went on his way, Elijah met him. Obadiah knew him, and fell on his face, and said, "Art thou my lord Elijah?" Elijah said, "I am. Go tell King Ahab that Elijah is here." But Obadiah answered, "There is no nation or kingdom where Ahab has not sent to seek for thee. But if I go to tell him that thou art here, the Lord will carry thee away, and hide thee; then, when Ahab shall come and cannot find thee, he will slay me." But Elijah answered, "As surely as the Lord liveth I will show myself to Ahab this day." Then Obadiah went and told Ahab, and Ahab came to meet Elijah. And when he saw him he said, "Art thou he that bringeth famine to the people of Israel?" But Elijah answered, "I am not the one who troubles Israel. It

is thou and thy family, because you have forsaken the Lord and have served Baal."

Then Elijah bade Ahab send and gather all the people at Mount Carmel, and to bring there also all the prophets of Baal. And Elijah came there and spoke to the people, saying, "How long will ye be in deciding whom ye will serve? If the Lord be God, obey Him; but if Baal be God, then obey him." The people heard what Elijah said, but they answered him not a word. Then Elijah said, "Behold, I am the only prophet of the Lord who is left in the land; for all the rest have been killed or made to flee for their lives. But, of Baal's prophets, there are four hundred and fifty men. Bring two bullocks, and let Baal's prophets choose one of them and kill it and lay it on Baal's altar, putting no fire under it. And I will take the other

bullock and kill it, and lay it on the Lord's altar, and put no fire under it. Then shall you pray to Baal to send down fire from heaven, and I will pray to the Lord; and the one that sends down fire to burn up his offering, he shall be God."

Baal's prophets chose their bullock and killed it, and laid it on the wood on the altar. Then they cried out to their idol from morning till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" and they leaped up and down at their altar. But no voice answered them; neither did any fire come down to burn up their offering.

Then Elijah mocked them, and said, "Call louder upon your god, for perhaps he is talking to some one and cannot hear, or has gone away from home on a journey, or is asleep and must be waked." Then they cried to Baal until the evening; still no answer

came. Then Elijah called all the people to him, and they came. He took twelve stones and built up the altar of the Lord which had been broken down, and then made a trench or trough around it. He put the wood on the altar, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood. Then he said to the people, "Fill four barrels with water, and pour it three times on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood."

In the evening, when the time had come for the priests at the temple to offer up a lamb for a burnt offering, Elijah came near to the altar and prayed to the Lord. "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, so that this people may know that thou art the true God, and that thou dost call them from their idols to serve thee again." Then the fire of the Lord fell from heaven upon the altar and burnt up the bullock and

the wood, and the stones of which the altar was made, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when the people saw this, they fell on their faces, and said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!"

And Elijah said to them, "Take now the prophets of Baal. Let not one of them escape." And the people took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slew them all there; for so the Lord had commanded. Then Elijah spoke to King Ahab, and said, "Now go and eat and drink, for the rain is coming and the famine will soon be ended." Ahab went to a place a little way off on the mountain, to eat and drink there; but Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel, and knelt down with his face to the ground, and prayed that God would send the rain.

DEATH OF THE PROPHETS OF BAAL.

Then he said to his servant, "Go up now and look toward the sea." The servant went up to a place still higher on the mount, and looked; but came back and said, "I see nothing." Elijah said, "Go again." And at the seventh time he came back saying, "There rises up, out of the sea, a little cloud as large as a man's hand." Then Elijah knew that the Lord had sent the rain. So he said to his servant, "Go, bid Ahab make ready his chariot and get himself down from the mountain, lest the rain prevent him." And as his servant was going, the little cloud rose up from the sea, growing larger and larger, till all the sky was black with clouds and wind. Ahab rode in his chariot to the city of Jezreel; and the Lord gave Elijah strength to run before the chariot till he came to the gate of the city.

When Ahab reached the city he told his

wife, Jezebel, all that Elijah had said, and how he had slain the prophets of Baal with the sword. At this Jezebel was very angry. She sent word to Elijah, saying, "Let the gods slay me also if I do not put thee to death by to-morrow!" Elijah heard these words and, knowing well her wickedness, was greatly afraid, and made haste to flee for his life to the city of Beersheba in the land of Judah.

There he left his servant, and went on another day's journey into the wilderness. There, in the wilderness, he sat down beneath a Juniper tree, and prayed, "Now, O Lord, take away my life. For I am weary of fleeing from my enemies!" Then the tired man fell asleep; and as he lay sleeping under the juniper tree, an angel came and touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." Elijah

looked, and there lay a cake on some coals of fire near him, and beside it lay a cruse of water. And he ate and drank, and lay down and slept again. And the angel of the Lord came a second time and touched him, saying, "Arise and eat; so that thou mayst have strength for the journey that is before thee." And he rose up and ate and drank; and the Lord gave him strength from the food to journey forty days and forty nights, until he came to Mount Horeb.

There he went into a cave on the mountain, and lay down to sleep; and the Lord spoke to him, saying, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Elijah answered, "The children of Israel have broken their promise to obey Thy law, and have thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword. I am the only one left, and they seek to slay me also."

Then there came a great and strong wind before the Lord, which tore up the earth on the mountain, and broke the rocks in pieces; but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind came an earthquake that shook the ground; but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake came a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a still, small voice; and when Elijah heard that, he knew that God was there. He wrapt his face in his mantle, for he was afraid to look upon God; but God said to him, "Come and stand upon the mountain." And Elijah went out and stood in the mouth of the cave.

Then the Lord asked again, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Elijah answered, "The children of Israel have broken their promise to obey Thy law; they have thrown down

Thine altars and slain Thy prophets with the sword; I am the only one left, and they seek to slay me also." But the Lord said, "Elijah, thou art not the only one left who serves me. I have yet seven thousand persons in the land of Israel, who have never bowed their knees to the idol, Baal. Go back, then, towards the wilderness of Damascus; and as thou goest, anoint Elisha to be prophet in thy place."

So Elijah returned, as the Lord commanded him; on the way he saw Elisha ploughing with his oxen in the field. Elijah came near to him; and as he passed by, he threw his mantle upon Elisha. Then the Lord made Elisha understand that it was His will that he should leave his home and go with Elijah. So Elisha left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said to him, "Let me go only, I pray thee, to kiss my father and my

mother and bid them farewell; then I will come with thee." So Elisha ran to his home to bid his father and mother farewell; and afterwards he came to Elijah and went with him and waited upon him, and was his servant even until the time when Elijah was no longer among the people of Israel.

Now there was in Syria, a king whose name was Benhadad. This king gathered all his army together, and went up to fight against the city of Samaria, where Ahab, the king of Israel lived. He sent messengers to Ahab, saying, "Thy silver and thy gold, and thy wives and thy children, even those thou lovest best, shall be mine." When Ahab heard this he was afraid, and sent back that Benhadad might take all those things.

Then Benhadad sent messengers again to Ahab; "Although thou wilt give me all thy

silver and gold, thy wives and thy children, these are not enough. But to-morrow I will send my servants, and they shall search thy house, and whatever they find there that thou dost value most, they shall take away from thee and bring to me." Then Ahab called all the elders of Israel to him, and told them the words that Benhadad had spoken. And the elders answered, "Allow not Benhadad to do what he has said."

When Benhadad heard this, he sent word to Ahab, "Lo, I've with me a great army; and I will come and take the city of Samaria." But Ahab replied, "Boast not until thou hast already gained the victory." Benhadad was angry. "Make ready for the battle!" he cried to his men. And they made ready. And the Lord sent a prophet to Ahab, who told him not to fear, but to go out against the Syrians

SLAUGHTER OF THE SYRIANS BY THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.

even with only seven thousand men. So Ahab went out against them, as the prophet had said, and fell upon them while Benhadad and his captains were drinking in their tents. Ahab and his seven thousand men fought against them, and the Syrians, frightened, confused, and surprised, fled. Only Benhadad himself escaped on a horse with a few of his choice horsemen.

And the prophet spoke to Ahab a second time, saying that Benhadad would again come up the next year against Samaria. And the prophets words proved true; for Benhadad's servants persuaded him to gather together another army as great as the first; and in a year he came up with it.

The men of Israel, when they went out against him, seemed only like two little flocks of kids, so few were there of them; but after

seven days, when the battle had begun, the Lord gave the men of Israel the victory this time also. For they slew of the Syrians a hundred thousand men, and the rest escaped to the city of Aphek. But even there they were pursued; for a great wall fell upon twenty-seven thousand of them, and Benhadad, terrified, fled into the city, and hid in a secret chamber.

By and by, his servants came to him and said, "We have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful kings. Let us, we pray thee, put on sackcloth, to show that we humble ourselves, and go out to the king of Israel and ask him to let thee live." So they put on sackcloth and came to Ahab, saying, "Thy servant Benhadad says, I pray thee let me live." "Was he not killed in the battle?" Ahab asked. And when he knew that he was

yet alive, he told them to go and bring him.

Then Benhadad came out to him, and because Benhadad promised to give him certain cities, Ahab allowed him to return to his own land. God was angry with Ahab for this; for He had given Ahab the victory over Benhadad that Ahab might put him to death. Then God sent a prophet to Ahab, who said, "Because thou hast let this man go, whom I meant thou shouldst utterly destroy, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thou shalt be slain instead."

Now there was a man, named Naboth, who had a vineyard in the city of Jezreel; and Ahab, the king, had a palace in that city, near Naboth's vineyard. Ahab said to Naboth, "Sell me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden to plant herbs in, and I will give thee a better vineyard for it; or, if

thou wouldst rather, I will give thee what it is worth in money." But Naboth did not want to sell his vineyard. It had belonged to his father, who, when he died, had left it to him; therefore it was Naboth's inheritance. So Naboth said, "The Lord forbid it, that I should sell the inheritance of my fathers." Ahab was sad and displeased. He lay down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food. "Why art thou so sad that thou wilt eat no food?" Jezebel asked. Ahab answered, "Because I spoke to Naboth, and said, 'Sell me thy vineyard for money; or, if thou wouldst rather, I will give thee another vineyard for it;' but he answered, 'I will not give thee the vineyard.'" Jezebel laughed, "Art thou now the king of Israel, and wilt thou be treated so? Rise up, eat thy food and be merry; I will give thee the vineyard of

Naboth!" she said. Then she wrote letters, and signed them with Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the elders of the city of Jezreel, where Naboth lived.

In the letters she commanded them to find wicked persons who would lie against Naboth, and say that they had heard him speak evil of God and the king. The elders did as Jezebel commanded; for they easily found two men who would bear false witness. So they took Naboth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, so that he died, and the dogs came and licked up his blood. Then they sent word to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth is stoned and is dead."

Jezebel heard it and said to Ahab, "Arise, now, and take the vineyard of Naboth for thine own, for Naboth is not alive." And Ahab arose and went down to the vineyard of

Naboth to take it for his own. But at the same time the Lord commanded Elijah to go and meet him there, and say to him, "Thou hast killed Naboth and taken his vineyard. I tell thee that in the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall the dogs lick thy blood."

Elijah went to meet Ahab; and when Ahab saw him, he said to him, "Hast thou found me, O my enemy?" "I have found thee, because thou has given thyself up to sin against the Lord," answered Elijah. Then Elijah told Ahab that evil must now come upon him and his family, and that they must all be destroyed, even as the family of Jeroboam had been.

Now Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, came down to Samaria to visit Ahab. Ahab told him that Benhadad, king of Syria, was

keeping one of his cities from him, and he asked him to go out with him to take that city. Now, Jehoshaphat was a good man and feared the Lord; so he said, "Let us inquire first whether the Lord is willing we should go." Ahab gathered his prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall I go up against the city to battle, or shall I not go?" They answered, "Go up, for the Lord will give it into thy hand."

But Jehoshaphat did not believe these men; he suspected they were false prophets, who said whatever would please Ahab. So Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not, besides these, a prophet of the Lord, whom we may ask?" "There is one, a man named Micaiah," Ahab answered. "But I hate him, because he prophecies no good to me, but always evil." Still Ahab called an officer, and bade him

make haste and bring Micaiah there. And the king of Israel and the king of Judah, having put on their royal robes, sat upon a throne in an open place by the gate of Samaria.

The messenger came, bringing Micaiah to the king. And Ahab asked him, "Shall we go to battle against the city, or shall we not go?"

At first Micaiah said, "Go." But the king saw that he did not mean what he said. "How often must I ask thee before thou wilt tell me what is true?" Ahab cried.

Then Micaiah answered, "I saw all the children of Israel scattered upon the hills like a flock of sheep that is lost and has no shepherd." For Micaiah knew that the Lord had shown him Ahab's army, as it would be after the battle, and Ahab, himself killed, and his army with no one to lead them.

Then Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not say to thee that he would prophesy no good about me, but evil?" Ahab was angry; and he commanded his servants, saying, "Take Micaiah to the governor of the city, and tell him to put this fellow in prison, and feed him on bread and water, and treat him cruelly until I come back safe from battle."

"If thou come back safe at all, then the Lord has not told me what I should answer thee," was all Micaiah had to say as thy led him forth to prison.

But for all this the king of Israel and the king of Judah went up together to fight against the city. "Now," said Ahab to Jehoshaphat, "I will put on another dress, that no one may know me. Then I will go up among the soldiers and fight in the battle; but put thou on thy royal robes, and let them see that thou art a king."

DEATH OF AHAB.

At this same time, and before the battle began, Benhadad, king of Syria, was commanding his captains to strive to kill Ahab. So when they saw Jehoshaphat in his royal robes, they said, "Surely this is king Ahab." But Jehoshaphat cried out; and when they saw it was not Ahab, they turned back from following him.

But a man in Benhadad's army shot an arrow, aiming at no one, and not knowing where it would strike; and this very arrow struck Ahab between the pieces of armor that covered his breast. Ahab fell; and as he fell, he said, "Turn back and carry me out of the host, for I am wounded."

All day long the battle lasted; all that day Ahab was held up in his chariot that he might see it, and send orders to his soldiers; but in the evening Ahab died. It was at the

time the sun was going down. Then word was sent through all the host of Israel, bidding every man to flee to his own home.

So the men of Israel fled, and Ahab was slain even as the prophet told him. Ahab's dead body they carried to Samaria, and buried it there; and as a man was washing the blood from his chariot near the city, the dogs licked up his blood as Elijah had said; just as the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth at the city of Jezreel.

Then Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, was made king in his palace; but he was a wicked king, as his father had been, and he fell from an upper chamber in his palace and was badly hurt. But before he died he sent soldiers to take Elijah and bring him to the king.

They found him sitting on the top of a hill; and as they drew near, the captain called

to him, and said: "Thou man of God, the king bids thee come down!" "If I be a man of God," Elijah answered, "Let fire come down from heaven and burn thee and thy fifty men." And fire did come down from heaven, and it burned the captain and the fifty men who were with him.

Then Ahaziah sent another captain with fifty men. And this captain called to Elijah, "Thou man of God, the king bids thee come quickly!" Elijah answered, "If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and burn thee and thy fifty men." Then fire came down again from heaven, and burned the captain and his fifty men.

Ahaziah sent a third captain and his fifty men; and when he came to the place where Elijah was, he fell on his knees before him, and cried, "O man of God, I pray thee, save

ELIJAH DESTROYS THE MESSENGERS OF AHAZIAH BY FIRE.

my life and the lives of these fifty men, thy servants. Let not the fire come down from heaven and burn us, as it burned the two captains, with their men, who came before us." And the angel of the Lord said to Elijah, "Go with this captain; be not afraid." So Elijah went with him to the king. And Elijah said to the king, "Because thou hast disobeyed the God of Israel, therefore thou shalt not rise up from the bed on which thou art laid, but shalt surely die." And Ahaziah died, as Elijah had said. Then Jehoram, his brother, was made king over the ten tribes of Israel.

It was now coming near to the time when the Lord was to take Elijah up to heaven. And one evening Elijah went with his servant Elisha to a place called Gilgal. Now Elijah wanted to be alone when the Lord took him up; so he said to Elisha,

"Stay here, I pray thee, at Gilgal, for the Lord sends me to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the Lord liveth, and as thou art living, I will not leave thee." So they went together down to Bethel; and the young men who went to the schools that were taught by the prophets at Bethel came to Elisha, and said to him, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thee to-day?" And Elisha answered, "Yes, I know it; hold ye your peace."

Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here at Bethel, I pray thee, for the Lord sends me to Jericho." But again Elisha said, "As the Lord liveth, and as thou art living, I will not leave thee;" and they went on into Jericho. Again the young men who were in the schools of the prophets at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, "Knowest thou that the Lord

will take away thy master from thee to-day?" And again he answered, "Yes, I know it; hold ye your peace."

Here Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, I pray thee, at Jericho, for the Lord sends me to the river Jordan." But Elisha answered, "As the Lord liveth, and as thou art living, I will not leave thee." And they went on again. A third time fifty young men from the schools of the prophets followed them.

Elijah and Elisha stood by the side of the river. Elijah took his mantle, wrapt it together, and struck the waters with it. Then the waters were parted before them, so that they two went over on dry ground. When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee." And Elisha asked, "Give me more of God's spirit in my heart,

ELIJAH TAKEN UP INTO HEAVEN IN A CHARIOT OF FIRE

even as thou hast." "Thou hast asked a hard thing," Elijah answered; "yet if thou see me when I am taken from thee, thou shalt have what thou askest for; if not, thou shalt not have it."

And as they walked on and talked together, behold there came a chariot of fire, with horses of fire; and in that chariot Elijah was taken up into heaven. Elisha saw it, and cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" For he called Elijah Father, as was the custom to call the prophets in those days.

Then Elisha seized upon his own clothes and rent them in pieces; and with the mantle of Elijah which had fallen from him, he struck the waters of the river, and they parted for him as they had done for Elijah, and Elisha went back, alone. Here the fifty young men

from the school of the prophets, who had followed afar off, met him, and bowed themselves down to the ground before him. "Let us go, we pray thee, and look for thy master," they said to Elisha; "perhaps the Lord has taken him away and left him on some mountain, or in some valley." But Elisha answered, "Ye shall not go." But the young men begged him till he said at last to them, "Go." They went then and searched three days for Elijah: but finding him not, they came back to Jericho and told Elisha. "Did I not tell you not to go?" was all Elisha said.

STORY OF ELISHA.

And now that Elijah had ascended into heaven and his mantle had fallen upon Elisha, Elisha became the great prophet to the people of Judah.

One day the men of Jericho came to Elisha and said, "Our city is pleasant to live in, as thou seest, except that the water is not good to drink; and it makes the ground so barren that nothing will grow here. What can we do?" Elisha said to them, "Bring me a new cruse, and put some salt in it." They brought it, and he went to the spring from which the waters flowed and threw the salt in. Then he cried, "Thus saith the Lord:

I have made these waters pure; and they shall not any more cause the people to be sick, or the ground to be barren." And from that day the waters were pure.

Another day a woman cried to Elisha, saying, "My husband is dead, and thou knowest that he served the Lord. But he owed money that he was not able to pay; and now the man to whom he owed it has come to take my two sons and make them his bondmen."

"What shall I do for thee?" Elisha asked. "Tell me, what hast thou in thy house?"

"I have not anything except a pot of oil," the poor woman answered.

Then Elisha said to her, "Go, borrow empty vessels of all thy neighbors, and bring them into thy house. Shut the door, and pour out the oil that thou hast into the vessels thou

hast borrowed." So she borrowed empty vessels, and carried them into her house. Then her sons brought them to her, while she poured the oil into them; when, behold, the oil kept on flowing until all were full! But she did not know they were full, until she said said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." "There are no more," he said.

Then Elisha said, "Go, sell the oil, and pay the man what thy husband owed him, and take the money that is left and buy food for thyself and thy children."

At another time, as Elisha journeyed through the land, he came to a city called Shunem, where a rich woman dwelt. She begged him to stop at her house and eat food; and so kind was she to him, that, whenever he passed by that way, he stopped there and did eat.

"I believe this is a prophet of the Lord who passes by us so often," she said to her husband. "Let us make a little chamber for him in our house, and put in it a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick; and whenever he comes to us he shall sleep there."

And it happened one day, when Elisha came with his servant, that he said to the woman, "Thou hast been very kind to us; what shall we do for thee? Is there anything thou wouldst have me ask for thee, from the king, or from the captain of the army?" But she answered, "I am satisfied with the things I have." Then Elisha said to his servant, "What can be done for her?" "She has no children," the servant said. Then Elisha called her, and she came again and stood in the door. "The Lord will give you a son," he said. And the words of Elisha came true;

for after a time a beautiful boy was born to her; and great was the joy in that household.

Now, when the child was grown, he went out into the field among the reapers. And while there he grew ill and cried to his father, "My head, my head!" "Carry him to his mother," the father said. And they carried him to her, but at noontime the boy died; and they took him up in their arms and carried him to the chamber which had been made for Elisha, and there they laid him on the bed.

"Send me, I pray thee," said the woman, "one of the young men, that I may make haste to the prophet and bid him come back again."

Now her husband did not know that the boy was dead, and he said to her, "Why wilt thou go to the prophet to-day? This is not a feast-day nor the Sabbath."

But she answered, "It is best for me to go. Drive on! make haste!" she said to the servant who went with her, "and do not stop till I bid thee!"

Elisha, then at Mount Carmel, saw her afar off, and said to Gehazi, his servant, "Look! yonder comes that Shunammite. Run to meet her, and ask if it be well with her, and with her husband, and with her child." She made no answer; but ran to Elisha and kneeled down, and caught him by the feet. "Did I ask that I might have a son?" the woman cried to Elisha. Then he knew that the boy was dead. "Make ready," he said to Gehazi; "take my staff in thy hand, and go to the child. Go in haste and if thou meet any man by the way, do not stop to speak with him; or if any man speak to thee, do not stop to answer him; but go and lay my staff upon the

face of the child." But the woman said to Elisha, "As surely as the Lord liveth and as thou art living, I will not go away without thee." Then Elisha rose up and went with her.

Now Gehazi, who had gone before them, came to the woman's house, and went up to the prophet's chamber, and laid the staff on the child. But the child did not speak or hear. "The child does not awake," Gehazi said when he came back to meet Elisha. And so, when Elisha came into the house, the child was dead, lying upon the bed. He went into the chamber, therefore, and shut the door and prayed. Then he put his mouth upon the child's mouth, and his eyes upon the child's eyes, and his hands upon his hands, until the child's flesh grew warm. Then Elisha came out of the chamber, and walked up and down

THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON RESTORED.

in the house. Then he went back to the child; and now he opened his eyes and came to.

"Call this Shunammite," he said to Gehazi. Gehazi called her; and when she had come into the chamber, Elisha said to her, "Take thy son." Then she bowed down to the ground in thankfulness, and took her son in her arms, and went out from the chamber.

Elisha then went to Gilgal; and while the sons of the prophets who lived there were sitting before him, he said to his servant, "Set the great pot on the fire, and boil pottage for these sons of the prophets to eat." So the servant went out into the field to gather herbs for the pottage; but, among others, he found a wild vine which was poisonous. Not knowing that it was poisonous, he gathered his lap full of it, and, when the pottage was cooked, poured it out for the men to eat. But as they

were eating, they tasted the vine and cried, "O thou prophet, there is poison in the pot!" And they would not eat of it. "Bring here some meal," Elisha said to them. They brought it, and casting it into the pot, he said, "Pour out now that you may eat." And they ate of it, and it did them no harm.

One day there came a man to Elisha with a present of twenty loaves of bread, and some ears of corn. And Elisha said to his servant, "Give these to the sons of the prophets, for they want food." But the servant said, "What! shall I set so small a quantity as this before a hundred men, and ask them to eat?" Elisha answered, "Set it before them; for thus saith the Lord, 'They shall all have enough, and there shall some be left.'" The servant obeyed; and behold as the food was divided among the people, the Lord caused

the twenty loaves of bread and the ears of corn to increase, so that there was indeed enough for them all. And more than that, after they had eaten there was some still left.

Now, there was a captain in the army of Syrians named Naaman. He was a great man with his master, the king of Syria, because of having so often gone out to war against the king's enemies, and having gained great victories over them. Naaman was indeed a mighty and brave soldier, but he was a leper. The Syrians had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid, who waited on Naaman's wife; and one day she said to her mistress, "I wish that my master could see the prophet that is in Samaria, for it may be he would cure him of his leprosy." The wife of Naaman told the king of Syria what the little maid had said;

THE LITTLE CAPTIVE MAIDEN.

and the king called Naaman, saying, "Thou shalt go to Samaria, and I will give thee a letter to the king of Israel, who lives there."

So Naaman started; taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment, as a present for the man who should make him well. First, he went to the city of Samaria, with the letter to Jehoram, king of Israel. In this letter Benhadad said, "I have sent Naaman, my servant, to thee, that thou mayst cure him of his leprosy." When the king of Israel read the letter, he was angry. "Have I the power of God, that I can cure this man of his leprosy?" he cried. "See, now, how Benhadad is seeking for an excuse to make a quarrel against me!"

But when Elisha heard that the king was angry, he sent word to him, saying, "Why art

thou angry? Send the man now to me, and he shall know that there is indeed a prophet in Israel." So Naaman came with his horses, and with his chariot, to the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent out this message to him: "Go, wash seven times in the river Jordan, and thou shalt be clean." But when the messenger came out to Naaman, and told him these words, he was angry. "Couldn't the prophet come out to me himself, and put his hand upon me and make me well? Are not the rivers in my own country better than all the rivers in the land of Israel?" So he turned and went away in rage. But his servants came near to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some hard thing that thou mightest be made well, wouldst thou not have done it? How much better then it would be to obey him, when he tells thee to wash only and be clean."

At first Naaman was too angry to listen; but after a time he did go down and dip himself seven times in the river Jordan; when, behold! his flesh grew pure and clean as the flesh of a little child! Then he went back to the house of Elisha, he and all the men who were with him, and he said, "Now I know there is no other God in all the earth but the God of Israel; I pray thee, take a present from thy servant." But Elisha answered, "As surely as the Lord liveth, I will take no present from thee." Then Naaman asked permission to take from the land of Israel some earth, as much as two mules could carry, that he might make an altar with it, when he should go back to his own land; for he said, "Never again will I offer a burnt offering to any other God but to the Lord."

Now, Naaman's master, the king of Syria,

was an idolater. And when he went into the idol's house to worship, he always wanted Naaman to go also, that he might lean on Naaman's arm. So Naaman asked Elisha if the Lord would forgive him if he went into the idol's house with his master, and bowed down with his master before the idol, since he did not worship it in his heart. And Elisha said, "Go in peace."

Naaman now left Elisha's house to go back to his own land; but he had gone only a little way, when Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, said to himself, "My master would take no present from this Naaman, but as surely as the Lord liveth, I will run after him and get something for myself." So Gehazi followed Naaman; and when Naaman saw him running after him, he stopped his chariot and came down to meet him.

"Is all well?" he said.

Gehazi answered, "All is well; but my master sent me to tell thee that since thou didst leave him, there have come to him two young men who are sons of the prophets; and he asks thee to give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments." Naaman answered, "I pray thee take two talents." And Naaman took two talents of silver bound in two bags, and two changes of raiment, and gave them to two of his servants to carry for Gehazi, since they were so heavy. And when they reached Elisha's house Gehazi took them from the servants' hands and hid them in a secret place.

Now the Lord had told Elisha what Gehazi had done; so, when he came again before him, Elisha said, "Where hast thou been, Gehazi?"

Gehazi answered, "Thy servant has been nowhere."

"Is this a time for us to take money, and garments, and riches?" Elisha said, not heeding Gehazi's untruth. "Therefore, because thou hast done this thing, the leprosy which Naaman has been cured of, shall be on thee and on thy children forever."

And even as Elisha spoke, the leprosy came on Gehazi, and he went out from him covered with it as white as snow.

At another time the sons of the prophets came to Elisha and said, "Behold now, the house in which we live with thee is too small for us. Let us go, we pray thee, to the river Jordan and cut down trees. Let us take, each of us, a beam, and build a larger house, in which we may live. And Elisha, we pray thee, go with us." Then he went with

them, and when they came to Jordan they began to cut down trees. But while one of them was at work the head of his axe flew off from the handle and fell into the water. Then he came to Elisha and said, "Alas, master!" for it was a borrowed axe. Elisha asked, "Where did it fall?" The young man showed him the place. Then Elisha cut down a stick from a tree and threw it into the river where the axe had fallen. At once the iron axe rose and floated on the top of the water. "Take it up," Elisha said; and the young man put out his hand and took it from the water.

Some little time after this, Benhadad, king of Syria, made war against Israel, and commanded his soldiers to find Jehoram, king of Israel, and take him captive. But when they came to the place, Jehoram had fled; for Elisha had told him the Syrians were coming.

And so it happened wherever the Syrians went to find Jehoram. Benhadad was troubled about this thing; for he wondered who could tell the king of Israel and so warn him. He believed it must be one of his own servants. Then he called his servants to him, and asked them, "Which one of you is on the king of Israel's side?" One of them answered, "No one of us is on his side, O king, it is Elisha, the prophet, who tells him where thou dost send us; he tells him, also, the words thou dost speak, even when thou art shut up in thy bed-chamber." Then the king of Syria said, "Go, and inquire where Elisha is; I will send and take him." "He is in the city of Dothan," the servants were told when they inquired.

So Benhadad sent horses and chariots and soldiers to Dothan by night; and these

soldiers spread themselves around the city. In the morning, when Elisha's servant arose, he saw them. He ran back to Elisha, saying, "Alas, my master, what shall we do?" Elisha answered, "Fear not, for we have more on our side than the king of Syria has on his." Then Elisha prayed that the Lord would show his servant that he was there to take care of him. And the Lord did show the servant; for behold, the mountain on which the city stood, became full of horses, and chariots of fire, that the Lord had sent to guard Elisha.

Then, when Benhadad's soldiers came into the city to take him, Elisha prayed that the Lord would send blindness upon them. And the Lord did as Elisha asked, and made them blind, so that they groped about, needing some one to lead them. Then Elisha went to them, and said, "Come with me, and I will

take you to the man you seek." Then he led them to the city of Samaria, where the king of Israel lived. And when they had come there, Elisha prayed to the Lord to open their eyes. And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw where Elisha had led them.

Then Jehoram, king of Israel, said to Elisha, "Shall I now smite them, and slay them?" But Elisha answered, "Thou shalt not slay them; but shalt set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go back to their own land." So Jehoram made food ready for them; and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away; and they went back to their master, Benhadad, the king of Syria.

But not long after this Benhadad gathered his army together again, and went up to fight against the city of Samaria. His soldiers

besieged it, and no bread could be brought in for the men of Israel; and there was a great famine in the city. And as the king of Israel walked among his soldiers on the top of the wall, a woman called out to him, saying, "Help me, O king!" "What aileth thee?" he asked. "This woman who is with me said to me the other day, 'Give thy little son, that we may eat him to-day, and I will give my son to-morrow!' So we killed my son and did eat him. But when I said to her the next day, 'Give thy son that we may eat him,' she would not; but she took him and hid him." Jehoram groaned; for it grieved him to know that the famine was so dreadful in the city, and that such a terrible thing had been done among the people.

But Jehoram was a wicked man, like Ahab, his father. It was for his sins, and the

THE FAMINE IN SAMARIA.

sins of the people, that these troubles were sent upon them. But Jehoram laid the blame upon Elisha, and declared that the prophet should be put to death that very day. Elisha well knew the king would send a messenger to kill him; so when the messenger came to his house, Elisha commanded the men who were there to shut the door, and not let them come in. Then the king himself came to Elisha's house, leaning on the arm of one of his officers. Elisha told them that the famine should cease, and that on the morrow there would be plenty of food in the city; but the officer, on whose arm the king leaned, would not believe it. Then Elisha said, "Because thou dost not believe my words, thou shalt see those words come true; but thou shalt not taste of the food which the Lord will send."

Four men of the children of Israel, who

were lepers, sat together by the gate of the city. "Why do we sit here until we starve?" they said to one another. "If we go into the city, the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. If we sit still here, we have nothing to eat, and we shall die here also. Let us then go out to the army of the Syrians. If they do not kill us we shall live, and if they kill us we can but die." So they rose up in the evening, and went out to the camp of the Syrians; but when they came to it no man was there. For the Syrians, thinking they heard the noise of chariots, and horses, and a great army coming out against them, had risen up, as it grew dark, had left their tents and their horses, and everything that was in their camp, and had fled for their lives.

Then the lepers went through the camp and saw no man. They went into the tents

and ate and drank of the food that was there, and carried out silver and gold and raiment, and went away and hid it. Then they came again and went into another tent, and carried away more silver and gold, and hid it also. Then they said to one another, "We are not doing right to keep this good news from the people. If we stay here till morning some punishment will be sent upon us. Let us, therefore, go and tell the king of Israel."

So they came to the city and called to the porters who watched at the gate, saying, "We have been to the camp of the Syrians. No man is there, but the horses are tied, and the tents are just as they were left." The porters ran to tell the king. Then the king rose up in the night, and said to his servants, "I will tell you now what the Syrians have done. They know that we are hungry; therefore

they have gone from the camp a little way and hid themselves, so that when we shall come out of the city to get food, they may rise up and take us captives."

"Let us take some of the horses that are left alive and go out and see," one of the king's servants answered. They took, therefore, two horse chariots; and the king sent men with them to look for the army of Syrians. The men went as far as the river Jordan, but could not find them. They found, however, the road strewed with garments and vessels that the Syrians had thrown away in their haste; and the men came back to Samaria and told this to the king.

When the people heard this, they ran out to the camp of the Syrians, and brought away all the flour and the corn that the Syrians had left. So the famine was ended, and again

there was plenty of food. Now it happened that the king placed the officer who would not believe the words of Elisha at the gate of the city to keep the people in order. But the people crowded on him in such numbers that he was trodden under foot and killed. So it came about as Elisha had said,—that he saw the famine ended, but did not taste of the food that God had sent for the people.

At another time, Benhadad, the king of Syria, living at Damascus, was very sick; and, hearing that Elisha had come to the city, he said to Hazael, one of his officers, "Take a present with thee, and go to meet Elisha, the prophet, and ask him whether or not I shall be well again."

So Hazael went to meet Elisha, and, taking with him as a present, as many of the good things of Damascus as forty camels could carry.

"The king of Syria has sent me to ask thee whether he shall get well of his sickness?" the servant said.

Elisha answered, "Go and tell him that he is not so sick but that he might get well, and yet the Lord has shown me that he will die."

Then Elisha looked long at Hazael without speaking; and then he wept. Hazael said, "Why weepeth my lord?" Elisha answered, "Because I know the evil things that thou wilt do to the children of Israel; their cities thou wilt set on fire, their young men thou wilt slay with the sword, and even their women and little children thou wilt cruelly put to death."

Then Hazael was astonished, and cried, "What! is thy servant a dog, that he should do these things?" Elisha answered sadly, "The Lord hast shown me that thou shalt be king over Syria."

Then Hazael went back to king Benhadad. "What said Elisha to thee?" he asked. Hazael answered, "He told me that thou shouldest surely get well." But the next day Hazael took a thick cloth, dipped in water, brought it into the chamber where the king was sick, and held it over the king's face until he could not breathe. And so Benhadad, the king of Syria, died; and Hazael made himself king of that land.

Now Jezebel, the wicked wife of Ahab, was still living in the city of Jezreel, and Jehoram, her son, the king of Israel, was there with her. One day Elisha called a young man, who was one of the sons of the prophets, and said to him, "Carry some oil with thee, and go to the city of Ramoth-Gilead, and there look for Jehu, who is a captain in the king of Israel's army. When thou hast found him,

take him into a secret chamher alone, and pour the oil on his head, and say, 'The Lord has thus annointed thee to be king over Israel.' Then open the door and flee. Stay not." So the young man went to Ramoth-Gilead, and found there the captains of the army sitting together, Jehu among them. And the young man went to them and said, "I have a message for thee, O captain." "For which one of us?" Jehu said. The young man answered, "For thee."

Jehu arose and went with him into the house. Then the young man poured the oil on his head, and said to him, "Thus saith the Lord, I have anointed thee to be king over Israel. After thou art made king, thou shalt put to death all who are left of the family of Ahab, that I may punish them for killing my prophets, and for the death of all my servants

whom the wicked Jezebel has slain. For the whole family of Ahab shall be destroyed, as the family of Jeroboam was destroyed, till not one of them is left. And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the city of Jezreel, and there shall be no one to bury her." And when the young man had spoken these words to Jehu, he opened the door of the house and fled.

Jehu came out again to the captains of the army. "What did this mad fellow say to thee?" one of them asked him. He answered, "He told me that the Lord anointed me to be king over Israel." Then the captains all blew with their trumpets, and cried out, "Jehu is king!" So they made Jehu king instead of Jehoram. Then Jehu said to the captains, "Let no one go to Jezreel to tell king Jehoram of what we have done, for I myself will go there." And Jehu made ready his chariot, and

rode to Jezreel; and as he came near the city, the watchman who stood on the tower over the gate saw him, and ran and told king Jehoram of it.

Jehoram said, "Send out a horseman to ask whether they are coming for peace or war." So there went out a man on horse back to meet Jehu, and when he met him, he asked, "Art thou coming for peace or war?" But Jehu would not answer him. Then Jehoram sent out another man who asked the same question. And Jehu would not answer him, but commanded them both to go behind the chariot and follow after it.

When Jehoram saw that the men did not come back to tell what Jehu said, he got into his chariot, and rode out himself to meet him. And as he came to him, he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" Jehu answered, "How can there be

peace while the sins of thy mother Jezebel are so many?" When Jehoram heard this, he turned the horses of his chariot to flee, for he knew that Jehu had come to fight. But Jehu drew a bow with all his might, and shot an arrow at Jehoram. It went into his heart, and he fell down dead in his chariot. "Throw Jehoram's dead body out upon the ground!" Jehu commanded. But the place where he threw it was in the very vineyard that Ahab, Jehoram's father, had taken from Naboth; for Naboth's vineyard was at the city of Jezreel.

Then Jehu rode into the city. And Jezebel, Jehoram's mother, heard of it, and she put on her ornaments, and painted her face, and looked out at a window. She had long since forgotten the words that Elijah had spoken. But her punishment was near; for as Jehu came in at the gate of the city, she

spoke to him. But he looked up at the window and said to the men in the house with her, "Who is on my side?" And three officers cried, "We are on thy side." Then Jehu said to them, "Throw her down." So the officers threw her down, and her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and the horses of Jehu's chariot trod her under their feet. And after Jehu left his chariot, and had eaten and drunk, he said to his servants, "Go, find now the dead body of that wicked woman. Bury her, for she was a king's daughter." And they went to bury her, but could find only her skull and her feet and the palms of her hands, for the dogs had eaten her flesh, even as it had been prophesied.

After this Jehu caused all the family of Ahab to be put to death; and so the words of Elijah came true, which he spoke fifteen years before, when Ahab took from Naboth the

vineyard which his father had left him; for at that time Elijah told Ahab that the Lord would send evil upon him and his family, until not one of them should be left alive. And of Jezebel he said, "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel."

Still Jehu did not do these things to obey the Lord, but simply because he wished to be great and to make himself king. For he took no care in other things to obey the Lord; but he reigned wickedly, as had the kings who had lived before him, for twenty-eight years; then he died, and then came Jehoahaz, who reigned seventeen years. Then he died; and Joash, his son, was made king.

Now Elisha was sick and about to die. And king Joash, who was again threatened by the army of Syrians, came to see Elisha, and stood by his bed and wept over him, and cried

out, "O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!"

Elisha said to the king, "Take a bow and arrows." Now Elisha said, "Put thy hand on the bow." And he put his hand on it, Elisha putting his hands upon the king's hands. "Open the window toward the east," Elisha then said. And he opened it. "Shoot!" and the king shot.

Then Elisha said to the king, "That arrow means that Joash shall gain the victory over the Syrians, and set the children of Israel free from them."

Elisha spoke to the king again, and told him to take the arrows in his hand, and strike with them on the ground. The king struck with them three times, and stopped. "Thou shouldst have struck five or six times, for then thou wouldst have smitten the Syrians till

they were destroyed; but now thou shalt smite them only three times," Elisha cried. And not long after, Elisha died and they buried him.

Then the Moabites came into the land to rob the men of Israel. And as some of the people were carrying out a dead man to bury him, they saw a band of the Moabites coming. They were afraid; and so did not go to the grave that was made ready for the man; but lowered him in haste into Elisha's sepulchre. And when the dead body touched the bones of Elisha, the man came to life again, and stood up on his feet; such great power had Elisha even in death.

And after Elisha died, king Joash fought against the Syrians, and gained the victory over them three times, as Elisha had told him; still he was never able to destroy them wholly. Joash was king for sixteen years; then

AMOS.

Jeroboam, his son, was made king in his place. The Lord was kind to Jeroboam and the people of Israel; for He saw the sufferings which their enemies caused them, and pitied them. He helped Jeroboam, as He had helped Joash, his father, in fighting against the Syrians; so that Jeroboam took from them two of their chief cities, Damascus and Hamath. Still the men of Israel refused to serve the true God; but went on worshipping the golden calves.

Then the Lord sent Amos to speak to them. Amos came and said, "You are the only people in all the earth whom the Lord has chosen for His own; yet instead of serving him, you serve idols, and disobey his commandments. You are cruel to the poor; you deceive and rob one another; you hate those persons who do justly and tell the truth; but

you take bribes from the wicked, and allow them to go on in their wickedness."

After Amos had spoken these things to the people, Amaziah, who was the chief priest at the idol's temple in Bethel, sent to king Jeroboam, saying, "Amos is speaking ill of thee. He says thou shalt be slain, and the people shall be carried away captive." "I was not always a prophet," Amos said in answer, "neither was I the son of a prophet; I was only a herdsman and a gatherer of wild figs. But as I was driving my flock, the Lord took me, and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to the children of Israel.' Hear then, Amaziah, what the Lord commands me to say to thee. Thou tellest me not to prophesy to the people when the Lord has sent me to prophesy to them. Now, therefore, the Lord will send His punishment upon thee also; thy wife shall go away

from thy home and leave thee alone; thy sons and thy daughters shall be slain by the sword, and thou thyself shalt die in a heathen land."

In time other kings followed; but all were wicked kings; they served false gods who, they pretended, allowed them to do every thing that was wicked. These things the people of Israel did. They made high places in all their cities, and groves on their hills; and on the tops of the high places, and under the shade of every green tree, they burnt incense and offered sacrifices to idols. They kindled fires before their idols, and made their sons and their daughters go through the fire, and burn if, perchance, the idols were pleased. Besides these things, they were wicked to one another, hating and killing one another, and robbing one another of houses, and lands, and gold. God waited long for them to turn from their

sins. He sent famines and pestilence and war into their land to show them He was angry. He sent His prophets, too, to warn them. At last God drove the people of Israel out of Canaan, as He had driven out the heathen nations that lived there before them.

So the kingdom of Israel was ended, after two hundred and fifty-four years from the time the ten tribes had chosen Jeroboam for their king. Nineteen kings had ruled over them during that time, all of whom were evil.

The king of Assyria sent people from his own land to come and live in the cities of Israel, where the ten tribes had lived. They came and lived there, and took those cities for their own; and we do not know that the ten tribes ever returned. Indeed no history can tell us what ever afterward became of them.

It may be they were slain; it may be they

scattered themselves among other peoples, and so in time lost their names as Israelites. No one knows; but to this day they are spoken of in history as the Ten Lost Tribes.

THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act,—act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!
— *Longfellow.*

But while all this was happening in the kingdom of Israel, what was happening in the kingdom of Judah? Let us see. We have not forgotten that Rehoboam, Solomon's son, was made king over the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and that he lived at Jerusalem, where was the temple that his father had built.

We remember, too, that Jeroboam would not allow the people of the ten tribes to go to Jerusalem to worship at the temple,

as God commanded; but that he set up two golden calves in that part of the land where the ten tribes lived, and taught the people to worship them instead. Yet there were priests and Levites living among the Ten Tribes at that time, who would not worship the golden calves.

They, with many other persons, came to live at Jerusalem, and to serve under Rehoboam as their king. They made his kingdom greater and stronger by coming; not only because there were so many of them, but because they were the ones whom the Lord was sure to bless.

For three years Rehoboam and his people did what was right, and obeyed the Lord. But when he grew rich and strong, and was no longer in fear that his kingdom would be taken from him, he turned away from

the Lord,— he and all the people of Israel. They built high places in the cities, made groves on all the hills, where they set up their idols and worshipped them.

Then the Lord sent the king of Egypt against Judah. That king, with twelve hundred chariots, and sixty thousand horsemen, and a very great army, took many cities in the land, and afterward came up to Jerusalem. Rehoboam and the princes of the people were afraid of him. Moreover, there came a prophet, who said to them, "You have left off serving God, therefore He will not help you against the king of Egypt."

When Rehoboam and the princes heard this, they bowed their heads and confessed that they had indeed done wrong. Then the Lord sent his prophet again to say, "Because you have humbled yourselves before

Me, the king of Egypt shall not destroy you; and yet because you have done so wickedly, he shall make you his servants."

So the king of Egypt came with his army into Jerusalem, took away much gold and silver out of the temple and out of the king's palace; but after doing this he returned to his own land. Rehoboam reigned seventeen years; and when he died, Abijah, his son, was made king in his place.

War was declared between Abijah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam, king of Israel. Abijah made ready for the battle with an army of four hundred thousand men; but Jeroboam had eight hundred thousand. Before the battle began, Abijah stood on a mountain and cried, "Here me, Jeroboam, and all you men of Israel! Do you not know that God made David and his sons to be kings over the

children of Israel forever? Yet Jeroboam has rebelled, and made himself king. And he has brought out wicked men to fight with us. You are a great multitude, and have with you the golden calves which Jeroboam made for your gods, but we worship the Lord; He is with us, and is our Captain. Oh, then, you men of Israel, do not fight against the Lord, for you cannot prosper."

But while Abijah was speaking, Jeroboam led out his army, and the battle began. The men of Judah cried to the Lord for help, and the priests who were with them blew their trumpets. Then the men of Judah gave a great shout, and as they shouted, Jeroboam and his army fled away. Abijah and his people followed them, and fought against them, and great numbers of the men of Israel were slain. So the men of Judah gained

the victory; and Abijah, pursuing Jeroboam into the land of the ten tribes, took his cities from him; nor was Jeroboam ever able to bring out an army against Abijah again. Abijah reigned for only three years; then he died, and Asa, his son, was made king.

Asa did what was right and pleasing to the Lord. And the people had rest from war. Then Asa said to them, "Let us build more cities in our land, with walls around them, and towers and gates and bars, so that our enemies can never take them from us." So they built more cities, and their kingdom grew strong and prospered year by year.

Now, Asa had an army of three hundred thousand men from the tribe of Judah carrying shields and spears, and two hundred and eighty thousand from the tribe of Benjamin carrying bows and arrows; and all these were

the bravest of brave soldiers. Yet, when the king of Ethiopia made war against him with an army much greater than his, Asa cried to the Lord, and said, "O Lord, thou canst help us whether we have many soldiers or few! Help us, then, O Lord our God, for in Thy name we go out against this great multitude." So the Lord helped the men of Judah in the battle, and gave them the victory.

And after the battle the Lord sent a prophet, who said to them: "Hear me, Asa, and all you men of Judah and Benjamin. The Lord will be with you, as he has been in this battle, to help you, so long as you shall serve Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. Therefore, fear not to do what is right, and you shall be rewarded." These words gave Asa great courage; and he put away the idols that the people had set up

through the land, and repaired and made new the altar of burnt-offering that stood in the court in the temple, which the people had long allowed to go to ruin.

Then he gathered all the people together at Jerusalem, and they offered up, out of the spoil that had been taken from the Ethiopians, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. And the people made a covenant with the Lord, and promised faithfully to serve Him with all their heart and with all their soul; and, moreover, that those who would not serve Him they would put to death, whether they be rich or poor. And to this promise they were faithful many years.

Still, after Asa had been king over Judah for thirty-five years, Baasha, the king of Israel, threatened to make war against him. And Asa, instead of praying to the Lord for help,

took silver and gold out of the temple and out of his own palace, and sent it to the king of Syria, saying, "Behold, I have sent thee this present of silver and gold. Go, therefore, in my place and make war against Baasha, king of Israel." And the king of Syria took the present and sent his army against the cities of Israel. Baasha withdrew his army and returned to his own land; nor did he venture to fight against Asa again.

But the Lord sent a prophet to reprove Asa for this. "Were not the Ethiopians a great army?" the prophet asked; "and had they not many chariots and horsemen? Yet because thou didst trust in the Lord, He gave thee the victory over them. For the eyes of the Lord look up and down through the whole world, to watch over those who love Him that He may help them."

Asa felt the rebuke; but so angry was he with the prophet that he shut him up in prison and kept him there for many months. After Asa had been king for thirty-eight years he died; and his servants laid him in a bed filled with sweet-smelling spices. Then they buried him in the sepulchre which he had made for himself in Jerusalem; and Jehoshaphat, his son, became king in his stead.

Now, the Lord was with Jehoshaphat because from the time he was made king he did what was right. Therefore the Lord gave him the kingdom to hold. All the people brought him gifts, and he had riches and honor in plenty. In the third year of his reign he sent men through all the cities of Judah, with the book having God's laws written in it, that they might teach these laws to the people. The heathen nations were afraid to come out

to war against Jehoshaphat; the Philistines brought him presents and tribute money; and the Arabians brought him flocks. Indeed, he became so very great, and had so great wealth, that he built castles, and cities also, in which to store his riches.

Once Jehoshaphat went down to the city of Samaria to visit Ahab, king of Israel.

Ahab killed sheep and oxen, and made a great feast for him, and persuaded him to go out to war against the king of Syria. It was in this battle that Jehoshaphat put on his royal robes, and went into the battle, making the Syrians think he was Ahab. But when he cried out, they turned back; for it was not God's will that they should put him to death. When this battle was over, Jehoshaphat came back to Jerusalem. And the Lord sent a prophet to meet him, who said, "Was it right

for thee to help the wicked Ahab, and to go out to war with men who serve not the Lord? Therefore the Lord is angry with thee. Yet thou hast done well in other things: in taking away the high places where the people worshipped idols, and the groves, and in making thine own heart ready to serve God."

At this rebuke Jehoshaphat did not rebel. He went no more, however, to the city of Samaria, but lived in Jerusalem. He went up and down through the land of Judah, commanding the people to put away their idols. He set judges in all the cities of Judah, to punish those who worshipped wrongly and to protect the innocent from harm.

"Be careful that you act justly," he said to the judges, "for you must give account, not to me, but to the Lord who seeth all you do. Therefore, fear thou Him."

There came a time when the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Edomites united and came up to fight against Jehoshaphat. When he heard of it he sent word to all the people, bidding them to eat no food, but to fast and pray. The people came out of all the cities of Judah to the temple at Jerusalem, to pray for help; and Jehoshaphat stood up before them and said, "O Lord, art Thou not our God, who didst drive out the heathen from this land, and gavest it to thy people, the children of Israel? Behold, we have lived here and built a temple, in which to worship Thee and pray to Thee. But now the Ammonites, the Moabites, and the Edomites have gathered together to drive us out of the land which Thou hast given us. Wilt Thou not punish them? for we alone are not able to fight with the great army they are bringing against us.

We know not what to do, but look to Thee."

Then the Lord sent a prophet to speak to Jehoshaphat and the people: "Be not afraid of this multitude. To-morrow go out against them. You will find them by the brook in the wilderness. Do not fight with them, but stand still, and see how the Lord will save you. O men of Judah and Jerusalem, fear not, for the Lord will help you!"

When the prophet had spoken these words, King Jehoshaphat bowed his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down too, and worshipped. It was early in the morning when they went out to meet their enemies.

As they set forth Jehoshaphat said to his soldiers, "Trust in the Lord and believe what His prophet has said; then we have the victory." And indeed the victory was theirs;

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ARMIES OF THE AMMONITES AND MAOBITES.

for when they reached the enemy behold, the Moabites and the Ammonites had fought and killed the Edomites and then had turned and slain one another. And when the men of Judah came up, there lay the enemy dead upon the ground! Then the men of Jehoshaphat went among the slain, and gathered up gold and silver and precious jewels, more than they could carry away.

Three days were they in carrying the spoil, so much of it was there. On the fourth day they met together in a valley near by, and blessed and thanked the Lord for giving them the victory. Therefore that valley was ever after called the Valley of Berachah, which means, the Valley of Blessing. And Jehoshaphat and all the men of Judah, to the music of harps and trumpets, returned to Jerusalem and to the temple.

Yet Jehoshaphat did wrong again. For he joined with the king of Israel to send ships to a land called Ophir, that they might bring back gold for him. A prophet came and said, "Because thou hast joined with that wicked king, thy ships shall be broken! And what the prophet said came true; his ships were broken and wrecked even at the place where they were built, so that they could not even start towards that far-off land.

Jehoshaphat died when he had reigned twenty-five years, and left seven sons. To six of them he gave presents of silver and gold, and other precious things, and made them rulers also over some of the cities of Judah; but Jehoram, his eldest son, he made king. Now Jehoram was not like his father; for he did not serve God. He cared only to get the kingdom, and to keep it for himself. So

fearful was he that his brethren might take it from him that he killed them all. He killed also some of the princes of the land, who he thought were not his friends.

Now, the Edomites had been servants to the kings of Judah for many years; but when Jehoram became king, they rebelled against him and chose a king of their own. Then Jehoram went out at night with all his war chariots and fought against them. But he could not overcome them and make them his servants again; for the Lord did not help one who had turned away from serving Him. It was not long before Jehoram built high places in the mountains and set up idols for the people to worship; and so he made the people of Judah to sin, even as the kings of Israel made their people sin.

There came a letter to him from Elijah,

the prophet, saying, "Thus saith the Lord: 'Because thou hast not obeyed Me, as Jehoshaphat, thy father, did, but hast sinned, and hast made the people sin, and hast slain thy brethren, who were better than thou art; therefore I will send trouble on thy people, thy wives, and thy children, and thyself.'"

First, the Philistines and the Arabians came against Jehoram. They came up to Jerusalem, and went into his very house and took away his riches. They carried away his wife also, and his sons; so that he had only one son left, Ahaziah, the youngest. After all, came a dreadful illness upon him. For two years he suffered; then he died, but the people did not mourn for him. They buried him in Jerusalem, but not in the sepulchre where the kings of Judah were buried. And Ahaziah, his son, they made king in his stead.

Ahaziah reigned only one year; and like his father he sinned. It was he who went down to Jehoram, king of Israel, at Jezreel; and while he was there, rode forth with Jehoram to meet Jehu. But we remember how Jehu drew a bow and shot an arrow at Jehoram, which entered his heart. Then Ahaziah turned his horses to flee, but Jehu followed him, crying, "Kill him also in the chariot!" Afterward the servants of Ahaziah brought his dead body in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him there in the sepulchre of the kings.

When Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, knew that her son was dead, she took her grandchildren and slew them that she might make herself queen.

But one of the sons, a little boy named Joash, was stolen away from her and hidden by his nurse in the temple. For six years

JOASH PROCLAIMED KING.

he was hidden there; and Jehoiada, the high-priest, watched over him, but the queen knew nothing of it. When the six years were ended, Jehoiada showed him to the Levites, and told them who he was. And the priests and Levites talked in secret together, and agreed to make Joash king.

Now, there were at the temple spears and shields that had belonged to King David. These the priests gave to the Levites; and, on the day that the high-priest appointed, the Levites came to the temple, and kept guard around it with their spears in their hands. Then they brought Joash, who was but seven years old, out of the chamber where he was hidden, and, pouring oil on his head, they annointed him. They put the crown, too, upon his head and made him king over Judah.

The queen heard the noise of the people

running and shouting; so she came to the temple and looked in. There stood the king by a pillar, with the crown on his head. The princes of the land stood by him, and all the people rejoiced. They blew on trumpets, and the singers in the temple sang to instruments of music. Then the queen was angry; she rent her clothes, and cried out, "Here is rebellion! Here is rebellion!" But the high-priest said to the Levites, "Take her out from the temple, lest she be slain in the house of the Lord." So they carried her to the king's palace; and there the wicked queen was slain.

Afterward the high-priest made a covenant with king Joash, and with the people, by which they promised to serve the Lord. For the queen had served Baal, and had built a temple having idols in it; but the temple of the Lord she had allowed to go to decay. She

had allowed her sons, also, to break into the temple, and carry away the sacred vessels of gold and silver, and put them into the house of Baal. But now that the queen was dead, the people ran to Baal's house, and tore it down, and broke the altars and images, and killed the priest of Baal. Then Jehoiada, the high-priest, sent the priests of the Lord and the Levites to the temple to attend to the worship of God there. He set porters also to watch at the gates, so that no one who was forbidden might enter.

When Joash grew older, and saw the temple broken and decayed, he called the priests and Levites to him, saying, "Go out through all the cities of Judah, and gather money from the people with which to mend and repair the temple of the Lord."

But the Levites did not obey. Then the

king sent for Jehoiada, the high-priest, and said to him, "Why do not the Levites bring the money with which to repair the house of the Lord?" So Jehoiada took a chest, and made a hole in the lid of it, and set it before the door of the temple. Then word was sent though all the land, that every man should bring a piece of silver money,— a half shekel,— as an offering to the Lord. The princes and the people brought the money willingly, and cast it into the chest; and when much had been cast in, the high-priest and the king's officers came and emptied it out and counted it, and put it in bags, and gave it to the men who were to repair the house.

After the work was done, and the house was finished, these men brought the money that was left, and gave it to the king and Jehoiada. The king had spoons and vessels of gold and

silver made of this, to take the place of those that had been taken from the temple by the sons of Queen Athaliah. And Jehoiada, the high-priest, caused sacrifices to be offered up at the temple every day.

He persuaded the king to obey the Lord; for, although Joash had taken pains to repair the temple, he did not always serve God in his heart. Yet, so long as Jehoiada lived, he did what was right; and when Jehoiada died, at the age of a hundred and thirty years, they buried him in Jerusalem in the sepulchre of the kings. For he had done great good in Judah.

Now, the princes of Judah were wicked men. They had worshipped at the temple while Jehoiada was alive, to be sure; but it was rather because Jehoiada had persuaded the king to worship there, and they had gone

always to the temple with him. As soon as Jehoiada was dead, however, they came to the king, and declared they would worship at the temple no more. And the king, because his own heart was wicked, gave them permission to stay away. Then they went and worshipped idols on the high places. Zechariah, the priest, the son of Jehoiada, when he saw the wickedness of the princes and the people, cried to them, "Why do you disobey the commandments of the Lord, and so bring trouble on the land? Know you not you cannot prosper while you disobey Him?" But King Joash was angry at Zechariah for saying this, and commanded the people to stone him to death. So did Joash forget how kind Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, had been to him!

At the end of one year only, the Syrians made war against Judah. They came into

Jerusalem and slew the princes, and took away their silver and gold, and sent it to the king of Syria at Damascus. Now, the king of Syria had not come up himself against Jerusalem, nor had he even sent a great army there. He had sent only a small company of men; but the Lord gave them the victory over a great multitude of the men of Judah, because the men of Judah had sinned.

So the Lord punished king Joash and the people for their sins. Next, a great sickness came upon Joash; and, after the Syrians were gone, his own servants rebelled against him and slew him while he lay in his bed. They buried him too in Jerusalem, but not in the sepulchre of the kings. And Amaziah, his son, was made king over the land.

Amaziah, after he was made king, gathered together three hundred thousand men, who

AMAZIAH AND THE PROPHET.

could fight with spear and shield. He hired also a hundred thousand more brave and strong soldiers from the kingdom of Israel, and together this great army went with the men of Judah and Benjamin against the Edomites. But there came a prophet, saying,

"O king! let not the men of Israel go with thee to the battle, for the Lord is not with them to help them. If they go, He will not help thee; for God has power to help thee, or to give thine enemies the victory over thee." Amaziah said to the prophet, "But what of the hundred talents of silver which I have already paid these men of Israel?" The prophet answered, "The Lord is able to give thee back much more than this, if thou wilt trust him." Then Amaziah obeyed the command of the Lord, and sent the men of Israel back to their own homes.

Then Amaziah went with his army against the Edomites, and the Lord gave him victory over them. But alas! when he came from the battle, he brought with him the idols of the men of Edom, and set them up to be his gods. Again the Lord was angry with Amaziah, and sent a prophet to speak with him. "Why dost thou worship the idols of Edom, which could not help the Edomites themselves when thou didst go up to fight against them?" the prophet said.

But Amaziah was angry at the prophet, and answered, "Art thou the one to tell me what I should do? Be silent lest I punish thee!"

After this, Amaziah sent messengers to the king of Israel, saying, "Come, let us look one another in the face." But the king of Israel answered him, "Because thou hast

gained the victory over the Edomites, therefore thou art proud and ready to boast. But stay now at home; why shouldst thou meddle with me, and so bring trouble on thyself and on all the people of Judah with thee?"

But Amaziah would not listen to the king of Israel; so he went out with the army of Judah, and the king of Israel came out against him. But at the very first sight of battle, the men of Judah were afraid and fled. The king of Israel took Amaziah captive, and brought him back to Jerusalem, and broke down the wall of the city. He went into the temple, and seized the vessels of gold and silver that were there, and the treasures that were in the king's palace. He carried away the people, as captives, to his own city of Samaria. After this the

people of Jerusalem itself rebelled against Amaziah; and when he tried to escape from them, they followed him and killed him, and then made his son Uzziah king.

Uzziah was only sixteen years old when he began to reign; but he had a good and wise counsellor, named Zechariah, whose advice he followed. He built towers by the gates of Jerusalem, and made them ready for war. He owned a great many cattle, and had wells dug for them out in the fields where they fed, and towers built there for his herdsmen to go into that they might be safe from robbers. He loved to sow grain and plant vineyards, and he had husbandmen to work for him, both on the plains and in the mountains.

He had also a great army. There were three hundred and seventy thousand men;

and for these he made shields and spears, helmets and bows, and slings with which to throw stones. He built in Jerusalem curious engines, which he put in the towers and on the walls; for with these he could shoot arrows and stones against the enemies when they came to make war on the city. He took cities from the Philistines.

The Ammonites brought him gifts, and indeed all nations heard of him, for he grew strong, and proud too. It was not long before he disobeyed the Lord; for he went to the temple and into the holy place with a censer in his hand, to burn incense on the golden altar.

Azariah, the high-priest, and eighty other priests with him, went into the temple after him, and said to him, "It is not right for thee, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord.

Only the priests, the descendants of Aaron, are commanded to burn incense." But Uzziah was angry at the priests for speaking these words; and instantly the leprosy came on his forehead. The priests saw it as he stood beside the golden altar. Then they took him and thrust him out of the temple. Yes, he himself dared not stay; for he knew the Lord had sent this punishment upon him.

And Uzziah was never cured; but lived a leper in a house by himself for long years; for it was the law that no leper should live with other people.

Jotham was Uzziah's son and was twenty-five years old when he began to reign. He built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers. He went out to war against

the Ammonites and made them his servants. Each year they gave him a hundred talents of silver and ten thousand measures of barley. And he too became very great; for in all that he did he tried to please the Lord.

But although he served the Lord, the people sinned; and God sent Isaiah, the prophet, to speak to them. "Even the dumb ox remembers his master, who is kind to him and feeds him; but the children of Israel do not remember the Lord, who gives them everything that they have," Isaiah said. For the land was full of idols, and the people worshipped them,—even those they had made out of pieces of wood with their own hands. "And to what purpose do you offer up sacrifices to Him in the temple, when afterwards you go away and

ISAIAH

worship idols? God cares not for your sacrifices any more! But if you will cease to do evil and learn to do good, then the Lord will hear your prayers and bless you."

But they would not do this, for their priests, their princes, and all the men of Judah were idolaters. "Then," Isaiah said, "the Lord will call your enemies from far-off countries. Those enemies will come swiftly with sharp spears and arrows; they will be fierce as lions, and no man can save the people out of their hands. The people of Judah shall be carried away captive; their land shall be left lonely and desolate; briars and thorns shall grow over it; the cities shall have no one living in them; and Jerusalem and the temple shall be destroyed. But, after many years, all these shall be rebuilt; for the Lord will raise up a great

king named Cyrus, who will command the city and temple to be built again."

A wonderful, wonderful prophet was this Isaiah. For not only did he warn and prophesy of the people, but he prophesied about Christ, saying that he would be descended from King David; that he would grow up in sorrow and suffering, and sometime be put to death by the people. Isaiah prophesied of John the Baptist also, and said that he would come before the Saviour, and would preach to the people in the wilderness, telling them to make ready for the Saviour's coming.

But the people of Judah would not listen to the preaching of this wonderful prophet Isaiah; so God took away their good King Jotham from them, and Ahaz, his son, was made king.

Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign. Unlike his father, he served idols, and offered up sacrifices to them on the hills and under the shade of trees, and made his sons pass through the fire before them, even as the heathen nations did. Then the kings of Syria and Israel came against him. They came up to Jerusalem and besieged the city. The king of Syria took many of the people and carried them away captive to his own city of Damascus; and the king of Israel killed a hundred and twenty thousand of the men of Judah in one day. He, too, took captive great numbers and carried them to the city of Samaria, where he lived.

And not only the kings of Syria and Israel made war against Ahaz, but the Edomites and Philistines came up and

fought against him. Ahaz was frightened. He took some of the silver and gold out of the temple, and some of the treasures out of his own palace, and sent them to the king of Assyria, begging him to help him against his enemies. The king took the present of gold and silver and did as Ahaz asked him, fighting against the Syrians and taking the city of Damascus from them. All this, however, did Ahaz little good; for the Lord was against him.

Ahaz went to Damascus to meet the king of Assyria; and while he was there he saw an idol's altar that greatly pleased him. Immediately he sent the pattern of it to the high-priest in Jerusalem, commanding him to make one like it. The high-priest obeyed. He put the altar in the court of the temple; and as soon as Ahaz returned

to Jerusalem he went to it and offered sacrifices on it. He even took away the altar of the Lord from its place in the court, to make room for the idol's altar.

After this Ahaz sinned more and more. He destroyed the lavers which Solomon had made to hold water in the court of the temple; he took down the great sea of brass from the backs of twelve oxen on which it rested, and set it on the pavement of the court. He also carried out from the temple the sacred vessels of gold and silver, and cut them in pieces. In every corner of Jerusalem he set up his idols. And because of all this there was great sorrow in the land; and glad indeed were the people when Ahaz died and his son Hezekiah was made king.

A PSALM OF LIFE.

Tell me not in mournful numbers,
"Life is but an empty dream!"
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
"Dust thou art, to dust returnest,"
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

— *Longfellow.*

DESTRUCTION OF THE ASSYRIANS.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

—*Longfellow.*

Hezekiah did what was right and pleasing to the Lord. His first good act, as soon as he was made king, was to open the doors of the temple which his father Ahaz had shut up, and call the priests and Levites, who had been sent away from the temple, to come and cleanse it and put it in order, that God might be worshipped there again. "For," said he, "our fathers have done wrong; they have shut up the doors of the temple, and have put out the lamps; they have not burned incense or offered

burnt offerings. The Lord has been angry with us, and sent us trouble and shame, as you have seen; our men have been killed by our enemies, and our sons and daughters have been led away captive on account of these things. And now let us make a promise and a covenant with the Lord to obey Him, so that He may not be angry with us. Therefore, ye priests and Levites, be diligent and made haste to cleanse and open the house of the Lord; for you are the ones whom He has chosen to go into His house and attend to His worship."

Then the priests, when they heard what the king said, went into the inner part of the temple. They began their work on the first day of the month, and on the sixteenth day they came to the king, saying, "We have cleansed all the house of the Lord,

and the altar and the table on which is set the shewbread. The vessels of gold and silver that Ahaz took away we have put together, and all things are ready now for the worship of the Lord."

Then King Hezekiah rose early in the morning and called the rulers of the city. Together they went up to the temple, and took with them seven bullocks and seven rams, seven lambs and seven goats. These Hezekiah commanded the priests to offer upon the altar as a sacrifice for all the people's sins. Then Hezekiah bade the priests and the Levites in the temple to play upon instruments and sing praises to the Lord. The offering began to burn on the altar; the songs of praise began with music from the cymbals, the harps, and the trumpets, which the priests and Levites

held in their hands. Then all the people worshipped; the singers sang; and the trumpets sounded, until the burnt offering was finished.

After the gifts that the king and the rulers had brought were offered up, Hezekiah invited the people to bring their offerings; and they brought seventy bullocks, a hundred rams, and two hundred lambs. These also the priests offered up. And the king rejoiced that the people were willing to bring so many offerings, and that the Lord's worship was begun at the temple again.

Then Hezekiah wrote letters to all the people in Judah, and to the people of the ten tribes of Israel also, asking them to come to Jerusalem and keep the feast of the Passover; for it had been many years now since the people had kept that feast as the

Lord had commanded them to keep it. The messengers whom the king sent went out among the people, carrying the king's letter, which said, "Ye children of Israel, who have been disobeying the Lord, turn now and obey Him; then He will turn to you and bless you. Be not like your fathers and your brethren, who have gone on sinning against Him, and have been carried away captive for their sins; but obey His commandments, and come to His temple and serve Him, that He may take away His anger from you. Then will He remember those who have been taken captive, and will make their enemies kind to them, so that they will allow them to come back to their own land."

So the messengers went with the king's letters through all the land. But when they came into the land of Israel the men of the

ten tribes would not listen to them; they mocked them and laughed them to scorn. Some of the Israelites confessed their sins and came to Jerusalem. But the people in the land of Judah were all willing to come. So there came to Jerusalem a very great company of people to keep the Passover. They went out through the city and destroyed all the idols' altars that were left there, and cast them into the brook Kidron.

Then they made ready to keep the feast of the Passover. Each man took a lamb, and brought it to the temple, and killed it before the altar. Afterward each man took it to his own house, and he and his family ate of it in the night, as the children of Israel did on the night that they came out of Egypt. For the Lord wanted his people to remember that night when He

had saved them from Pharaoh and the cruel Egyptians.

You remember that, when the children of Israel kept the Passover the first time in Egypt, they were commanded to eat only one kind of bread, called unleavened bread, and for seven days afterward they were allowed to eat no other bread than this.

So this time, and for seven days after they had eaten the lamb, they ate unleavened bread. And they kept the feast through all those seven days with gladness. The priests and Levites sang praises every day, playing on harps and trumpets. The Levites went out among the people and taught them, that they might know God's law to obey it. And King Hezekiah spoke kindly to the Levites who were doing this work, and encouraged them in it.

Through the seven days of the feast, the people feasted on the peace offerings which they had brought to the temple, and confessed their sins to the Lord. And after they had kept these seven days, they all agreed to stay seven days more, praising God.

And King Hezekiah and the princes gave them great numbers of cattle for sacrifice,—two thousand bullocks and seventeen thousand sheep. And all the people of Judah, with the priests and Levites, and the men of Israel also who had come to keep the feast with them, rejoiced. For, since the time when Solomon lived, no such feast had been kept in Jerusalem.

At last this joyous feast was over. The people went out to the different cities of the land, and broke in pieces all the idols that they

found there, and cut down the groves. They destroyed the high places and the altars that had been made to worship idols on. They did this both in the land of Judah and in the land of Israel; and when this was done, then they returned every man to his own home. Then Hezekiah sent the priests and Levites to the temple, as King David had appointed them, to take turns in attending to the worship of the Lord. He gave them sacrifices to be offered up every day, in the morning and evening, and on the Sabbath and feast days.

The king told the people also to bring a tenth part of all that grew in their fields to the priests and Levites for food, as Moses had so long ago commanded; for this, too, the people had long neglected. But now they obeyed the king most gladly and brought these things to the temple. Not only the people of Judah did

so, but many who lived in the land of Israel. When the king and the princes came to the temple and saw the great heaps of food that had been brought, they thanked the Lord who had made the people willing to bring so much.

Then Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites, "How happens it that there is so much?" And the chief priest answered, "Ever since the people began to bring their offerings the priests and Levites have had enough, and not only enough but plenty to spare. For the Lord has not only made the people willing to bring offerings, but He has blessed their fruit and their corn in the field, making them grow well, so that the people have had large offerings to bring."

Then Hezekiah commanded that store-houses be made ready near the temple, where the food could be kept safe. He appointed

the Levites to take care of it and to give to all as much as they needed for themselves and their families.

It was not long after this when Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, came into Judah with his army and took many of the cities. Hezekiah hastened to build up the walls of Jerusalem where they had been broken down, and to make shields and darts in abundance. He gathered also the men of Judah together and set captains over them. "Be strong and brave; fear not the king of Assyria or the multitude that is with him; for there is more on our side than on his. He has men to fight for him; but we have God to fight for us." So Hezekiah cheered and encouraged his people.

The king of Assyria sent his servants on before him to Jerusalem to tell the people he

was coming. "Do not listen to Hezekiah when he tells you that he is able to fight against me," the Assyrian king said, "and that the Lord will save you out of my hand. Listen not to his words, but pay me tribute money of gold and silver, and come out and be my servants. Then I will do you no harm."

When Hezekiah heard this, he rent his clothes and put on sack cloth, and went up to the temple to pray to the Lord. He sent priests and elders to Isaiah, the prophet, to tell him of the message from the Assyrian king. Then Isaiah sent word to the king of Judah, saying, "This saith the Lord: 'Be not afraid of the words of the king of Assyria; for I will send a great punishment upon him, and he shall die by his own sword.'" And so Hezekiah sent the king's servants back to

their master, to tell him that Hezekiah refused to give up the city.

The king, angry, sent his servants again to Hezekiah, this time with a letter, saying, "Do not let thy God make thee believe that I cannot take Jerusalem. Thou hast heard how the kings of Assyria have destroyed other nations. Their gods were not able to save them, and how can thy God save thee?"

Hezekiah read the letter which the king of Assyria had sent, and, taking it up to the temple, he spread it open upon the altar and prayed: "O Lord, thou art the only God over all the kingdoms of the earth; for it was Thou who didst make heaven and the earth. Lord, open Thine eyes and see, and turn Thine ears and hear the words which the king of Assyria hath spoken against Thee. It is true that he hath destroyed the other nations and cast their

HEZEKIAH LAYS THE LETTER UPON THE ALTAR.

gods into the fire; for those gods were only dumb idols of wood and stone. But now, O Lord, he seeketh to destroy Jerusalem. Save us, I pray Thee, out of his hands, so that all the kingdoms may know that Thou art not like the idols of the heathen nations, but that Thou art the Lord, and that there is no other God beside Thee."

The Lord heard Hezekiah's prayer, and answered, "I have heard the prayer thou hast offered, and I will do as thou asketh. This king shall not come before the city with shields and spears, nor build forts around it, neither shall he shoot an arrow into it. By the way that he came he shall return again; for I will save Jerusalem out of his hand." And these words came true; for that night the Lord sent His angel into the camp of the Assyrians, and the angel slew a hundred and eighty-five

thousand of them. Then the king of Assyria went back with shame to his own land; and while he was worshipping in the house of his own idol, two of his own sons put him to death with his own sword.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB.

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen;
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath flown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not a breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And their idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

— *Byron.*

SIEGE OF JERUSALEM.

STORY OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

Long after this, when the people had again fallen into evil ways, and Jehoiachim was king of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up and besieged the city.

Jehoiachim was afraid of Nebuchadnezzar, and at once went out to him and surrendered the city. Then Nebuchadnezzar took this king, and the princes of Judah, and the builders, the carpenters, and all the strong and brave soldiers that were in Jerusalem, and carried them away as captives. And he took them to his own land, and there gave them a place to live by the river Chebar.

Then king Nebuchadnezzar commanded

the chief of his officers to choose for his servants in his palace at Babylon the princes of the children of Israel; those that had no fault in them, and who were young and beautiful and quick to learn. For he wanted these to be taught in all the wisdom of the Chaldeans, and to learn also the language of the Chaldeans; and after they had been instructed in these things for three years, then they were to come to the palace and wait upon the king.

Among those that were chosen were four young men, named Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These four were brought to Babylon, and teachers were at once set over them, that they might be taught as King Nebuchadnezzar desired.

Now, the Chaldeans worshiped idols and offered up sacrifices of animals and wine to them; and the priests then ate the sacrifices

and drank the wine that had been offered to their idols. But Daniel refused to eat the meat that had been offered to idols. Therefore he said to himself, "I will not eat the meat nor drink the wine that the king sends us."

And the three young men who were with him refused, too, to eat and drink. Daniel spoke to the officer who had the care of him, and told him his wish regarding the food the king sent. The chief officer loved Daniel, yet he dared not do as Daniel wished. "I am afraid it will displease the king," he said; "for he sends you your meat and drink; and if, after a while, he should see your faces look paler and thinner than the faces of the other young men who eat food from the king's table, he will be angry with me, and may put me to death." And the chief officer gave Daniel and his friends to the care of his steward.

Then Daniel went and spoke to the steward: "Try us, I beseech thee," he said, "ten days; give us, for that time, only fruit to eat, and water to drink. Afterward look at our faces and at the faces of the other young men, and if we look not as well as they, then give us whatever thou shalt think best to eat." So the steward gave them fruit for ten days; and at the end of that time their faces were indeed fatter and fairer than the faces of the other young men who ate the food from the king's table.

So the three years passed by, and the chief officer brought them at last into the palace of the king. Nebuchadnezzar talked with them, and was rejoiced to find that among all those who had been chosen for his servants, none were like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abadnego. So they took their places in

the palace and waited on the king. And in all the questions which the king asked them concerning the things they had learned, he found them ten times better than all the men in his kingdom.

One night king Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that troubled him. He commanded his servants to call all the wise men of Babylon to come and stand before him. "Tell us what thy dream was, and we will interpret it for thee," the wise men said. "It is very strange," the king answered; "but the dream is gone from me and I cannot remember it. Tell me what my dream was, and the interpretation of it, or you shall be cut to pieces, and your houses shall be torn down. Tell me my dream and interpret it for me, and you shall have great riches and honor." But the wise men could only say, "If the king will tell us his

dream, we will tell the interpretation of it." "You want to deceive me and gain time, until some evil has happened to me!" the angry king cried. "But tell it to me now; and when you tell me what my dream was, I will know that you can tell me the interpretation of it." "Alas, there is not a man on earth who can tell a king his dream; therefore there is no king or ruler who would ask such a thing," the wise men answered. "It is a strange thing that the king asks of us — to tell him a dream which he himself has forgotten."

Then the king was angrier still. He commanded that every wise man of Babylon should be destroyed, and the commandment went forth that they should be slain. Now, Daniel and his three friends had not been called before the king; but as they were among the wise men, the king's servants

sought to put them to death. "Why is the command made in such haste by the king?" said Daniel, when he heard what had happened; and at once Daniel went up to the palace to the king. "If time shall be given me, I will show the king the interpretation of his dream." "Go; and see that thou do!" the king cried.

Daniel went first to his three friends, and together they prayed that they might be shown what the king's dream was, so that they might not be slain. And in a vision God did show Daniel the dream and also the interpretation of it. And Daniel hurried away to the captain of the king's soldiers. "Destroy not the wise men of Babylon," he cried, "but bring me before the king, and I will tell him the interpretation of his dream."

"Art thou sure that thou art able to make

known to me the dream that I have dreamed and the interpretation of it?" the king asked. "The secret which the king has asked, no wise man on earth can tell him," Daniel answered; "but there is a God in heaven that telleth secret things. In thy dream he has made known to thee what shall happen in the times to come. And God has told it to me, not because I am wiser than any one else, but that I might tell it to thee, and show thee that He is the true God who is worshipped by us, the captives from Judah." Then Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar his dream.

"Thou sawest in thy dream, O king, a great image; terrible, and shining with exceeding brightness as it stood before thee. Its head was made of fine gold. Its breast and arms were of silver, and the rest of its body was of brass. Its legs were of iron, and its

feet were of iron and clay. As thou wast looking, there came a stone out of a mountain, that struck the image upon its feet and broke them to pieces. Then the image fell, and the iron, the brass, the silver, the gold, and the clay were all broken up together into pieces as small as the dust that is left on the threshing-floor after the farmer has been threshing his grain. Then the wind blew them away, no one could tell where; and the stone that had broken the image grew to be a great mountain, filling all the earth." This was, indeed, the king's dream.

Then Daniel told the king the interpretation of it. The gold, the silver, the brass, the iron, and the clay that were in the image, were different kingdoms. The head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar himself; because God had given him the greatest of the kingdoms,

and made him the greatest king on the earth. After he should die, new kingdoms would arise; the silver, the brass, the iron, and the clay were these. Last of all, the Lord would set up one kingdom more, which should break in pieces all the kingdoms that had been before it, as the stone cut out of the mountain had broken the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

After Daniel had told the king his dream and the interpretation of it, the king fell on his face before Daniel, and cried, "It is true that your God is a God of gods, and a King of kings, and can tell all secret things, because He has told thee this dream!" And he made Daniel and his three friends great men, and gave them many gifts, and appointed them rulers over provinces of Babylon.

Then Nebuchadnezzar, the king, made

an image of gold, and set it up on a plain in the province of Babylon. He called the princes, the governors, the captains, the judges, and all the rulers of his kingdom together before the image. Then one of the king's servants called out in a loud voice to them: "It is commanded that, so soon as you hear the sound of music, you shall fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar, the king, has set up. And whosoever falleth not down and worshippeth, shall that same hour be cast into a burning, fiery furnace."

Then the king commanded the musicians to play; and, as soon as the people heard the sound of the music, all the Chaldeans fell down and worshipped the golden image. But some of the Chaldeans came running to the king, and cried, "Thou, O king, hast

made a law that every man who shall hear the sound of the music shall fall down and worship the golden image, and that whosoever falleth not down and worshippeth shall be cast into the burning, fiery furnace. But there are some Jews whom thou hast set over the province of Babylon, named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and these men, O king, have not obeyed thee; they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

"Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego," the king said, "that ye do not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image that I have set up? Now, should you be ready when you hear the sound of music to fall down and worship the image I have made, no harm shall be done to you; but if you worship not, you shall be cast, the same

hour, into a burning, fiery furnace! And who then shall be able to save you out of my hands?"

Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered, "If thou wilt cast us into the burning, fiery furnace, our God, whom we serve, is able to save us from death, and He will save us out of thy hand, O king! Yet even if He let us burn, we tell thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image thou hast set up."

Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury. He looked in fierce anger on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. "Heat the furnace seven times hotter than it was heated before," he cried to his servants. "Bind Shadrach Meshach, and Abednego, and cast them into it!"

So, these three men were bound and

SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO IN THE FIERY FURNACE.

thrown into the fiery furnace. And because the furnace was so exceedingly hot, the flame killed the men who cast Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in. But these three men,— Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,— soon rose up and walked in the fire; for God would not let it burn them.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king, was astonished. "Did we not cast three men, bound, into the midst of the fire?" he cried. "We did, O king." "But lo! I see four men loose and walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt. And the form of the fourth is like the Son of God!"

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning, fiery furnace. "O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the Most High God," he cried, "come forth!" Then Shadrach, Meshach,

and Abednego came out of the midst of the fire. And the princes, the governors, and the captains who were gathered together, saw these men whom the fire had not hurt; not a hair of their heads was burned, nor was the smell of fire upon them.

Then Nebuchadnezzar bowed his head and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent His angel to save His servants that trusted in Him. Therefore I make a decree and a law, that every nation and people that shall speak evil of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be destroyed, and their houses shall be torn down; for there is no other God that can save like Him." And the king made Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego greater than they had been before in the province of Babylon.

Now, Babylon was a very great city. The river Euphrates ran through the midst of it, so that part of the city was on one side of the river and part on the other. The wall around Babylon was sixty miles long, and there were one hundred gates of brass, and above the walls were high towers. The palace of King Nebuchadnezzar was of great size, and ornamented with statues of men and animals, with vessels of gold and silver, and with many other costly and beautiful things that he took from the nations he had conquered from time to time.

Near his palace were large gardens, called the Hanging Gardens, because they were high up in the air, on the side of a hill. Steps led up to its top, and water was drawn from the river that flowed through the city, to water the gardens that were planted upon it;

so that from a distance it looked like a mountain covered with woods. Here Nebuchadnezzar lived. He was a mighty king, and had for his servants those who were continually telling him of his greatness.

Again the king had a dream, and he called Daniel and said to him, "I saw a tree that stood in the midst of a wide plain, and the height of it was great. The tree grew and was strong, and it reached up to heaven, and its branches spread out to the ends of the earth. The leaves of it were green and the fruit plentiful. The beasts of the field lay down under its shadow, and the birds of the air made their nests in its branches, and everything that lived came to it for food. And I saw in my dream a holy angel come down from heaven. He cried with a loud voice, 'Hew down the tree, and cut off its branches,

shake off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get away from under it, and the birds from its branches. Yet leave the stump of the tree in the ground, where the dew shall fall upon it and wet it. Let it be with the beasts in the field until seven years are past.'

"This dream I, Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now, O Daniel, tell me the interpretation of it; for all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make it known to me. But thou art able, for the Spirit of God is in thee."

Daniel was afraid to answer the king. But the king said to him, "Do not fear to tell me the interpretation of it." Then Daniel said, "The tree which thou sawest, and which grew and was strong, whose height reached to heaven, and under which the beasts lay down, and among whose branches the birds built their nests—that tree means thee, O king, who

hast grown great and full of power, and whose kingdom reaches to the ends of the earth. And the holy angel that thou didst see coming down from heaven, and saying, Cut down the tree and destroy it, yet leave the stump of its roots in the earth, and let it be wet with dew, and be with the wild beasts of the field till seven years pass over it, — this is the interpretation, O king, and this is what God has said shall be done to thee: —

"Thou shalt not dwell in thy palace to be waited on by thy servants and to live among men. But they shall drive thee out to live with the beasts of the field. Thou shalt eat grass like oxen, and lie upon the ground like them, and be wet with the dew, till thou hast learned that God rules over all nations of the earth and makes whomsoever He will to be king."

And all of Daniel's words came true; for only twelve months from that time, when Nebuchadnezzar was walking in his palace of the kingdom of Babylon, he looked out upon the mighty city, its walls, its temples, its palaces, and its gardens, and said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by my own power and for my own greatness?"

While the words were yet on his lips, there came a voice from heaven, saying, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom is taken from thee. They shall drive thee from men, and thou shalt live with the beasts of the field! They shall make thee eat grass like the oxen, until thou knowest that God rules over all nations of the earth, and makes whomsoever He will to be king."

And in that same hour reason fled from King Nebuchadnezzar, so that he was no longer

fit to rule over his kingdom, or to live among men. He ate grass like oxen, and lay upon the ground, his body wet with the dew. His hair grew like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. But when the seven years were ended, reason came back; and King Nebuchadnezzar looked up to heaven, and praised God and honored him who lives forever, and whose kingdom shall have no end. Then the rulers and governors sought him, and made him king again, and all his greatness came back to him.

STORY OF BELSHAZZAR.

But, by and by, Nebuchudnezzar died, and Belshazzar became king of Babylon. He made great feasts to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine with them in his palace. And while he feasted, he commanded his servants to bring the gold and silver vessels that his father, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem. They brought the golden vessels, and the king and his princes drank from them; and as they drank, they praised their idols of gold and silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

But while they were feasting and making merry, lo! a hand wrote words upon the wall

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST.

where the king and his lords held their feast. The king saw the hand that wrote. His face was changed, for he was filled with fear, so that his knees trembled and smote one against the other. "Bring in the wise men!" he cried out aloud to his servants. The wise men came. "Whoever shall read this writing and tell the interpretation of it shall be clothed with scarlet and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom," he cried. But none of the wise men could read the writing or tell the interpretation.

Then the king was troubled yet more, and his lords were astonished at what they saw. The queen spoke to him, saying, "Let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy face be sad. There is a man in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in

the days of thy father, Nebuchadnezzar, so great wisdom was found in him, that the king, Nebuchadnezzar, made him master over all the wise men of Babylon. He hath knowledge and understanding for interpreting dreams and telling of secret things. Let this Daniel be called, and he will tell the interpretation."

Then was Daniel brought in before the king. "Art thou that Daniel who was brought captive with the children of Israel, out of Judah?" the king asked. "I have heard of thee, and that the spirit of the gods is in thee, so that thou hast understanding and excellent wisdom. The wise men have been brought in before me to read this writing, but they cannot. Now, if thou canst read the writing and make known the interpretation of it, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom."

"Keep thy gifts for thyself and give thy rewards to another," Daniel answered. "Yet will I read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation. The Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar, thy father, a kingdom, and glory, and honor. Because God made him so great, all nations trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he slew; and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he set up; and whom he would, he put down. But when his heart was full of pride, so that he forgot God, he was made to come down from his throne; for his greatness was taken from him. He was driven out from his palace, and from living men, and became like the beasts. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew, until he learned that God rules over the nations of the earth, and that He maketh whomsoever

DANIEL INTERPRETING THE WRITING ON THE WALL.

He will to be king. And thou, his son, though thou knoweth all this, hast been proud, too, and sinned against God. They have brought the vessels of His temple before thee, and thou and thy lords have drunk wine in them. Thou hast praised the idols of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which cannot see, nor hear, nor know anything; whilst the true God, who lets thee live, and gives thee all things, thou hast not praised. Therefore hath He sent thee this warning: 'MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN!' which means, 'Thy kingdom is ended. God hath taken it from thee. He tried Thee as king, but thou hast not obeyed Him. He hath given thy kingdom to the Medes and Persians.'"

Belshazzar commanded his servants to clothe Daniel with scarlet, and to put a chain of gold about his neck, and to make him the

third ruler in the kingdom. That same night Darius, with the army of the Medes and Persians, came into Babylon; and Belshazzar, with many of his people, was slain.

One of the first acts of King Darius, after he had conquered Babylon, was to choose from the people one hundred and twenty princes; over these princes he set Daniel. But the princes hated Daniel because he was greater than they, and resolved to find some fault with him, that they might complain to the king. So they gathered together and came to the king, and said, "King Darius, we want a law and a decree to be made, that whosoever shall ask help of any god or man, except of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions." King Darius signed the writing and the decree; for he saw no harm in it.

Now, although Daniel knew that the

DANIEL.

writing was signed, he went into his house, and, with the windows of his chamber opened toward Jerusalem, he knelt there three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks to his God, as he had always done. The men gathered together, and saw Daniel praying and asking help of God.

This was just what they wanted; and they went to the king and said, "Hast thou not signed a decree, that whoever shall ask help of any god or man for thirty days, except of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?"

The king answered, "The decree is signed, and is made a law of the Medes and Persians, which changes not. Then said they, "Daniel, who is one of the captives of Judah, obeys thee not, O king, or the decree thou hast made; but prays and asks help of his God three times a day."

The king, when he heard these words, was displeased with himself for having made the decree; for he had no wish to punish Daniel. Indeed, he set his heart on finding an excuse for him; and tried until the evening to save him from punishment. But the presidents and the princes gathered together before the king, and cried, "Thou knowest, O king, that it is the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or law which the king has made can be changed." So Darius commanded his servants to bring Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke to Daniel, and said to him, "Surely thy God whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee?"

A great stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king went home to his palace to pass the night

DANIEL IN THE DEN OF LIONS.

fasting. He would not have the instruments of music played before him as at other times; and he could not sleep.

Very early in the morning he rose and came in haste to the den of lions, and cried with a mournful voice unto Daniel, "O Daniel, thou servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"

Then said Daniel to the king, "My God has indeed sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they have not hurt me." Then was the king glad; and he commanded that they should take Daniel out of the den, and no hurt was found upon him. "Now," commanded the king, "bring those men who have spoken against Daniel, and cast them into the den of lions."

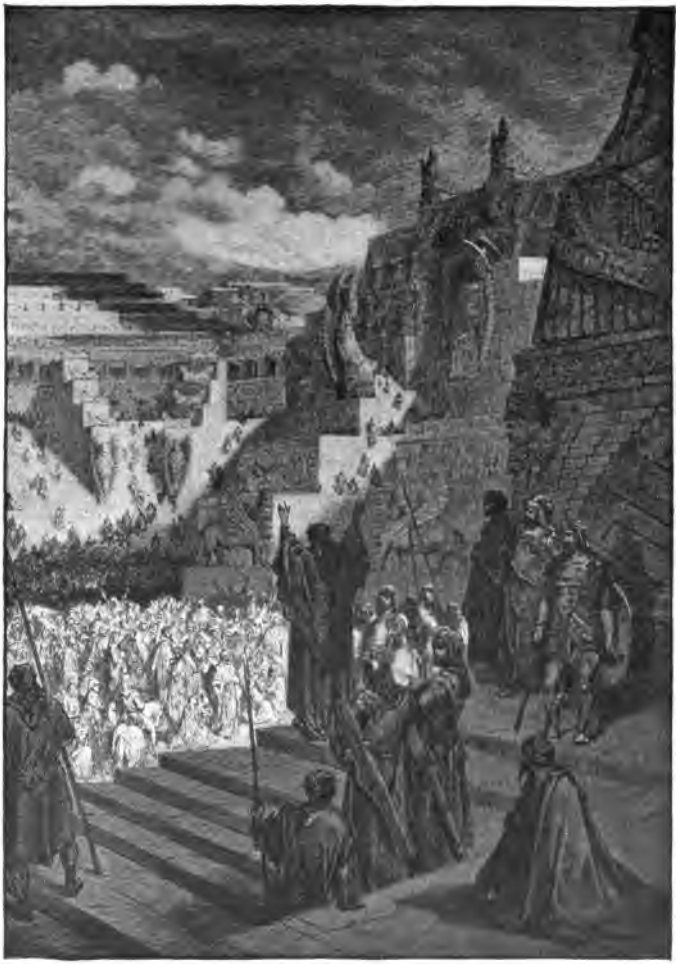
The men were brought; and the lions

leaped on them and broke their bones in pieces, even before they came to the bottom of the den. Then King Darius wrote to all the people and nations of the earth, saying, "I make a decree that in every part of my kingdom men obey the God of Daniel. For He is the living God; His kingdom is the one that shall not be destroyed, and His power shall never end. He is the God who can save from danger, who has saved Daniel from the mouths of the lions."

And so Daniel passed the rest of his life in peace and quiet; and one day, when he was praying, the angel Gabriel came to him and touched him. It was in the evening, at the time when the priests offered up lamb for a burnt offering at the temple in Jerusalem. And the angel said, "O Daniel, I am come to tell thee of things

that shall happen. At the beginning of thy prayer I was commanded to come unto thee, for thou art greatly beloved of God. Therefore, understand the words that I shall speak. Even yet the Jews shall go back to their own land and build up Jerusalem; and in five hundred years the one shall be born who shall be a great king over all the earth."

And it came about as the angel had said; for when Cyrus became king, he sent the Jews back to their own land. He made a proclamation and sent it through all his kingdom, saying, "Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia: Who is there among the captives from Judah that wishes to go back to his own land? Let him go now and build up the house of the Lord; and let the people of my kingdom help those who go,



THE KING'S PROCLAMATION GRANTING LIBERTY TO THE JEWS.

by giving them silver and gold, and cattle, and raiment, to take with them."

Then the chief men of the Jews, and the priests, and the Levites, and all those whom the Lord made willing to go, prepared to start on their journey. And many persons gave them vessels of silver and gold, and cattle, and raiment, as the king had commanded. And king Cyrus brought out the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple, and he counted them, and gave them to the prince of Judah. The prince took the vessels, and carried them to Jerusalem. And there went with him forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty persons of the children of Israel, besides their servants,—seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven more.

And the people built again the altar of

THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

the temple, and offered up burnt offerings on it every day,—a lamb in the morning, and a lamb in the evening, as the children of Israel used to do before they were carried away into Babylon.

Then they made ready to rebuild the temple. They hired men of Tyre, as Solomon had done, to cut down cedar trees on mount Lebanon, and make rafts of them, and float them by sea to Jerusalem. They gave these men meat, and drink, and oil, while they worked; and they paid money to carpenters and masons, who began to build the house. When the first stones of it were laid, the priests and Levites played on trumpets and cymbals, and sang songs of praise to the Lord. And the people were glad and shouted with a great shout, because the building of the temple was

begun. But many of the old men, who remembered the temple which stood there before, wept with a loud voice. So that the sounds of shouting and the sounds of weeping went up together and were heard afar off.

STORY OF ESTHER.

But the Jews had not all come back to Jerusalem. Many of them still lived in the land of Persia, under Ahasuerus. In the third year of his reign, this king made a great feast for his servants in the court, or garden, of his palace. Around the court were hung curtains of white and green and blue, which were fastened by cords and silver rings to pillars of marble. The beds in the palace were made of gold and silver, and the pavement was of red and blue and white and black marble. The persons at the feast drank from vessels of gold, and the king's wine poured freely.

Vashti, the queen, also made a feast for

THE QUEEN OF VASHTI REFUSING.

the women in the palace. And on the seventh day of the king's feast, after he had drunk wine and was merry, he sent to bring Vashti before him, with the crown upon her head, that the princes and people might see her beauty. Now, in Persia, the women lived in a separate part of the house by themselves, and never came out before men unless they wore veils, So, when King Ahasuerus sent for Vashti, the queen, to come before all the princes and people, that they might see her face unveiled, she refused to obey the king's command.

At this the king was angry. "What shall we do to Queen Vashti, and how shall she be punished, because she has not obeyed the command of the king?" he cried.

One of the wise men answered, "Vashti has done wrong, not only to the king, but also

maidens who were brought before him. He set the royal crown upon her head at once and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king made a great feast,— called Esther's feast,— and he gave gifts to his servants for her sake. But Esther was still careful to do all that Mordecai told her; for she obeyed him now, although she had been made queen, as willingly as when she lived a daughter in his house.

At one time, in those days, two of the king's officers, being angry, wanted to lay hands on the king and kill him. But Mordecai, who was a watchman at the king's gate, heard what they said, and told Esther to tell the king. When the officers were examined, their guilt was found out, and they were both hanged on a gallows. And what Mordecai had done to save the king's life was written

down in a book, where an account was kept of all the things that happened in the kingdom.

Now, there was at the palace a servant named Haman. Ahasuerus had made Haman a great man, and had set him above all the princes who were at the palace with him. And all the king's servants who watched by the king's gate bowed down and did reverence before Haman, except Mordecai, who would not bow down before him.

When Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, he was angry. But he was not satisfied to punish Mordecai alone; he determined to punish and destroy all the Jews that were in Persia. So Haman went to King Ahasuerus and said, "There are Jews living in the provinces of thy kingdom, and they have laws of their own which are different from the laws of thy people, neither

do they obey the king's laws. Therefore it is not well for the king to let them live. And if thou wilt make a decree that every Jew shall be destroyed, I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the king's treasury."

King Ahasuerus listened to what Haman said, and took his ring from his finger and gave it to Haman; for this ring the king used when he made a law, or decree. So when he gave Haman his ring, he meant that Haman should make such a decree as he chose against the Jews and seal it with his ring; for then it would be the same as if the king himself had made it.

Haman at once called the king's scribes or writers together, and they wrote for him a decree, that, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the people of Persia should kill and destroy all the Jews in the kingdom, both

young and old, little children and women. And the slayers had permission to take the houses, and lands, and money of those they slew, and to keep them for their own. Then Haman sealed the decree with the king's ring, and copies of it were sent by messengers to the governors and rulers of all the provinces, so that it might be made known to all the people of Persia.

When Mordecai heard of the decree that Haman had made, he was filled with sorrow. He rent his clothes, and put on sack-cloth, and went out into the streets of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry. He came even before the king's gate, though he might not pass through there, because it was forbidden that anyone should pass through the king's gate who was clothed in sack-cloth. And in every province where the messengers brought

the decree, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay down in sack-cloth and ashes, because of their grief.

Now, Queen Esther had not heard of the decree; but when her maids came and told her that Mordecai was clothed in sack-cloth, and that he cried in the streets of the city, Esther sent new garments to him, that he might take off the sack-cloth. But he would not change. Therefore Esther called one of the king's officers to her, and sent him to ask why he was troubled. Mordecai told the officer all that had happened, and of the money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasury, if he might be allowed to destroy the Jews. He gave the officer also a copy of Haman's decree to show Esther; and he bade the officer tell the queen to go into the palace to the king and beseech him to save the Jews.

The officer came and told Esther what Mordecai said. But Esther could only say to Mordecai, "All the king's servants, and all the people of Persia know, that whosoever shall go in before the king without being called, whether it be man or woman, must be put to death, unless the king shall hold out the golden sceptre. I have not been called to go unto the the king's presence these thirty days. How then can I go and speak with him?" Then Mordecai sent again to Esther, and said to her, "Do not think that, because thou art queen, our enemies will spare thee when they kill all the Jews. And if thou wilt not try to save thy people at this time, some one else shall save them." Then Esther sent word to Mordecai, saying, "Go and gather together all the Jews that are in the city, and let them fast for me, and neither eat nor drink for three days,

ESTHER BEFORE THE KING.

night or day; I, also, and my maidens will fast, and then I will go in and speak with the king, though he has not called for me. If I be put to death, I am willing to die."

On the third day Esther dressed herself in her royal robes, and went into the inner part of the king's palace, and stood where the king, as he sat on his throne, could see her. She was very beautiful; and when he saw her he held out his golden sceptre. "What is thy desire, Queen Esther?" he said; "it shall be given thee, even to the half of my kingdom." And Esther answered, "If the king be willing, I invite the king and Haman to come to-day to a banquet that I have made ready for him."

Now, the king knew that Esther had invited him because she wanted to ask some favor of him; and as they sat at the banquet, he said to her again, "What is thy desire? It

shall be given thee, even to the half of my kingdom." "My desire is," Esther answered, "that the king and Haman come to another banquet, which I shall make ready for them to-morrow, and then I will tell the king what it is I would ask of him."

So the king and Haman went from the queen's house that day, and Haman's heart was filled with pride that he had been to the queen's banquet. But as he went out, and passed Mordecai at the king's gate, and saw that he did not bow to him, nor do him reverence, he was filled with anger. He hurried to his home, and calling for his friends and for his wife, Haman boasted to them of his riches and greatness, and told them how the king had set him above all the princes, and above all the king's other servants. "And Esther, the queen, allowed no one to come in with the

king to the banquet that she had made ready, excepting myself!" he cried. "And to-morrow I am invited to come again! Yet all these things cannot make me happy while Mordecai, the Jew, sits in the king's gate." Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and to-morrow ask the king that Mordecai may be hanged on it!" cried Haman's wife. This pleased Haman, and he went out and commanded the gallows to be made at once.

That night the king could not sleep, and he bade his servants to bring him the book, in which was written down an account of the things that had happened in the kingdom. The book was brought and read before him; and there it was found written that Mordecai, a long while before, had saved the king's life by telling of two of the king's officers who had intended to kill him. "What reward has been

TRIUMPH OF MORDECAI.

given Mordecai?" king Ahasuerus said to his servants; "or what honor has been done to him because he did this?"

Just then some one came into the court of the palace.

"Who is it in the court?" the king said.

Now, it was Haman who had just come, that he might speak with the king and ask his permission to have Mordecai hanged on the gallows which had been made ready for him.

"It is Haman who stands in the court," the king's servants answered.

"Let him come in," the king said. "What shall be done for the man whom the king wants greatly to honor?" the king said to him.

Then Haman thought to himself, "The king means me; I am the one whom he wants greatly to honor." So he answered, "Let the royal robes that the king wears, and the horse

ESTHER ACCUSING HAMAN.

that he rides, and the crown that is set on his head be brought to the man whom the king wants greatly to honor. Let him wear the king's royal robes, and his crown, and let him ride upon the king's horse! Let one of the king's most noble princes lead the horse through the streets of the city, and cry out to all the people, 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor!'"

Then the king said to Haman, "Make haste, then, and take the robes, and the horse, and the crown, and do to Mordecai, the Jew, as thou hast said! Leave nothing that thou hast spoken undone." Poor Haman! He dared not disobey the king; so he took the king's robes, and his horse, and his crown, and brought them to Mordecai, and himself led him on horse-back through the streets of the city, and cried out before him to all the people,

"Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor!"

Haman made haste to his home full of shame, and with his face covered, so that no one might know him. He told his wife and all his friends what had happened to him; and while he was yet talking with them, the king's messenger came to bring him to the banquet that Esther had made ready.

The king and Haman came to the banquet of Esther, the queen. "What is thy petition, Queen Esther?" the king said to Esther; "for it shall be given thee, even to the half of my kingdom." Esther answered, "If the king be pleased with me, this is my request, that the king will save my life and the lives of all the Jews. For evil things have been spoken against us which are not true; and I and my people are to be slain."

"Who is the man that has dared to do these things?" Ahasuerus cried.

"Our enemy is this wicked Haman who sits before us," Esther answered.

Haman trembled before the king and queen. The king rose from the banquet in great anger, and went out into the palace garden; while the miserable Haman fell down before the queen to beg for his life.

"Behold the gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made ready for Mordecai, who saved the king's life, is standing by the house of Haman!" an officer cried.

"Hang him upon it!" the king commanded. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had made ready for Mordecai.

Then King Ahasuerus gave to Esther the house in which Haman had lived, and Mordecai was called in before the king; for Esther

had told him who Mordecai was, and how kind he had been to her. The king took off his ring, which he had before given to Haman, and gave it to Mordecai, and Esther made Mordecai ruler over the house that had belonged to Haman. Still Esther was troubled, because of the decree which Haman had written and sealed with the king's ring, and had sent out to all the provinces, telling the governors, the rulers, and the people of Persia, that, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, they should kill and destroy the Jews in every city, and take away whatever belonged to them. So she came again to the king, although he had not called her, and fell down at his feet and wept. The king held out the golden sceptre toward her, and she arose and stood before him, begging that the decree of Haman might be changed.

Now, the king himself could not change the decree that he had allowed Haman to make; for no law of the Medes and Persians could ever be changed.

"But," said King Ahasuerus, "make another decree concerning the Jews, such an one as shall please thee, and seal it with the king's ring."

Then Mordecai called the king's scribes together again, and commanded them to write another decree, saying, "The Jews have permission, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, to gather themselves together in every city, and slay and destroy all who shall try to harm them."

Copies of this decree Mordecai sent to the different provinces of the kingdom by messengers on horseback, and by riders on mules and camels. The messengers went out

in haste according to the king's command; and Mordecai came out from the palace clothed in royal garments, such as the king himself wore, of blue and white, and with a crown of gold upon his head. The people were glad when they saw him, and everywhere the Jews feasted and were happy.

On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month the Jews took their swords, and gathered themselves together in every city, to fight for their lives; and they gained the victory over all who came out against them. But on the fourteenth and fifteenth days they rested from fighting against their enemies. So were Esther and her people saved from those who had planned to destroy them. And the queen sent letters to all the Jews, telling them to keep the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the twelfth month every year as a time of

feasting and gladness, when they should rejoice together, and give presents to one another, and gifts to the poor. For at that time they had been saved from their enemies, and their sorrows and mourning had been turned into joy.

Little more do we know of the Jews for over four hundred years. From other books than the Bible we learn that they dwelt as servants to the kings of Persia for many years longer. Then Alexander the Great, a mighty general and king, who was at war with Persia, brought an army and took Jerusalem, and the Jews served him.

After his death, one of the Egyptian kings came to Jerusalem, and seeing how beautiful the temple was, he determined to go not only into its courts, but into the Holy of Holies, where the priests alone were allowed

REBUILDING THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM.

to go. The priests begged him not to so disobey God, and the people cried out with fear and sorrow when they saw him; still he went on until he came to the holy place. But while he was there, so great a fear and weakness came upon him, that he was carried out like one dead; and, in his anger, he treated the Jews most cruelly, making slaves of some and putting others to death. So cruel was he, that the Jews rebelled against Egypt and came to be servants of the kings of Syria; but one of these Syrian kings came with an army and took Jerusalem; and in three days, forty thousand Jews were slain, and as many more sold to be captives. The Syrian king then went into the temple and took away the golden altar, the golden table, the golden candlestick, and all the treasures that were there.

Two years afterward he sent again one of his generals, with twenty-two thousand men against Jerusalem. This king came into the city; and waiting until the Sabbath day, when he knew the Jews would not fight against him, he set his soldiers upon the people, commanding them to kill the men, to take the women and children captive, to rob the houses, and to throw down the city walls. The soldiers obeyed his commands, putting so many of the Jews to death that the streets of the city and the courts of the temple ran red with their blood.

Not satisfied with this, the king of Syria afterward made a decree forbidding the Jews to offer up sacrifices to God, or to obey God's laws, or to keep the Sabbath day. He sent an officer to Jerusalem to drive them away from the temple, and to make it a place to worship

idols in. Heathen altars were set up in every city of the land, and the Jews who would not sacrifice upon them were slain.

At another time they became servants to the Romans, as they had been before to the Egyptians and to the Syrians. The Romans sent a general, named Herod, to be their king, who, though not one of the children of Israel, yet pretended to believe their religion and to worship God as they did. He was, in truth, a fierce and cruel man, who cared only to rule over the people.

Herod was king for eighteen years; and then, because the Jews hated him for his wickedness, he determined to build up the temple anew. By this he hoped to please them, and so make them more willing to be ruled over. The temple was the one built by the Jews when they returned from Babylon.

It was nearly five hundred years old, and much of it was broken and decayed. Herod built this up again with great stones of white marble; and the stones lay covered, in some places, with plates of silver and gold. The building was very beautiful, and shone so brightly under the morning sun that it dazzled the eyes. The inside of the temple was divided, as it had been before, by a curtain, into two rooms: one of them, the holy place where the golden altar, the golden table, and the golden candlesticks stood; and the other, the most holy place, where the ark used to stand.

But the ark had been lost long before, when the Jews were carried captive to Babylon. They had no ark now to bring into the most holy place; so it was empty, except that a stone lay on the spot where the ark

should have been. Outside the temple was the court,— the court of the priests,— where the altar of burnt-offering and the laver stood. Outside of this court was another,— the court of Israel,— where the men of Israel might come. Beyond this was a third court, where the women of Israel might go. Still outside this, and around all the other, was a very large court,— the court of the Gentiles; — for the Gentiles, that is, the people of other nations besides the Jews, were allowed to go into this. Nine large and splendid gates opened into the courts; one more splendid than the rest, called the Beautiful Gate. It was seventy-five feet high, and covered with Corinthian brass. Around the different courts walls were built. Inside this wall were wide porches with flat roofs, which rested on marble pillars so large that three men, their arms outstretched, could

hardly reach round one of them. The floor of the porches was paved with different colored marble. One of the porches was called Solomon's, because it stood over a very high wall which Solomon had built up from the valley below.

So ends this part of the story of the Israelitish people, as told in the Old Testament. It would seem as if now they were a lost race. Still we must not forget that they were a chosen people; and that there was a wonderful prophecy still to come true.

And that prophecy? Let us read on. In the New Testament we shall find it — the prophecy of the King to come, — the story of the Christ Child.

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